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THE
DRAMATIC WORKS
OF
SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON, BART.
/
IN TWO VOLUMES
VOL. II

THE DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE—THE LADY OF LYONS
NOT SO BAD AS WE SEEM



NEW YORK
FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY
1890

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

LOUIS THE FOURTEENTH.

THE DUKE DE LAUZUN,
COUNT DE GRAMMONT,
MARQUIS DE MONTESPAN,

} Courtiers.

MARQUIS DE BRAGELONE, betrothed to Mademoiselle de la
Vallière.

BERTRAND, the Armourer.

Courtiers, Gentlemen of the Chamber, Priests, &c.

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE.

MADEMOISELLE (afterwards Duchess) DE LA VALLIÈRE.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

ABBESS.

Nuns, Ladies, Maids of Honour, &c.

PROLOGUE.

To paint the Past, yet in the Past portray
Such shapes as seem dim prophets of To-day; —
To trace, through all the garish streams of art,
Nature's deep fountain — woman's silent heart; —
On the stirr'd surface of the soften'd mind
To leave the print of holler truths behind; —
And, while through joy or grief — through calm or strife,
Bound the wild Passions on the course of Life,
To share the race — yet point the proper goal,
And make the Affections preachers to the Soul; —
Such is the aim with which a gaudier age
Now woos the brief revival of the stage; —
Such is the moral, though unseen it flows,
In Lausun's wiles and soft La Vallière's woes;
Such the design our Author boldly drew,
And, losing boldness, now submits to you.

Not new to climes where dreamy FABLE dwells —
That magic Prospero of the Isle of Spells —
Now first the wanderer treads, with anxious fear,
The fairy land whose flowers allured him here.
Dread is the court our alien pleads before;
Your verdict makes his exile from the shore.
Yet, ev'n if banish'd, let him think, in pride,
He trod the path with no unhallow'd guide;
Chasing the light, whose face, though veil'd and dim,
Perchance a meteor, seem'd a star to him,
Hoping the ray might rest where TRUTH appears
Beneath her native well — your smiles and tears.

When a wide waste, to Law itself unknown,
Lay that fair world the DRAMA calls its own;
When all might riot on the mines of Thought,
And Genius starved amidst the wealth it wrought;

He who now ventures on the haunted soil
For nobler labourers won the rights of toil,
And his the boast — that Fame now rests in ease
Beneath the shade of her own laurel-trees.
Yes, if with all the critic on their brow,
His clients once have grown his judges now,
And watch, like spirits on the Elysian side,
Their brother ferried o'er the Stygian tide;
To where, on souls untried, austere sit
(The triple Minos) — Gallery — Boxes — Pit —
'Twill soothe to think, howe'er the verdict end,
In every rival he hath served a friend.

But well we know, and, knowing, we rejoice,
The mightiest Critic is the PUBLIC VOICE.
Awed, yet resign'd, our novice trusts in you,
Hard to the practised, gentle to the new.
Whate'er the anxious strife of hope and fear,
He asks no favour — let the stage be clear.
If from the life his shapes the poet draws,
In man's deep breast lie all the critic's laws:
If not, in vain the nicely-poised design,
Vain the cold music of the labour'd line,
Before our eyes, behold the living rules;
The soul has instinct wiser than the schools!
Yours is the Great Tribunal of the Heart,
And touch'd Emotion makes the test of Art.
Judges august! — the same in every age,
While Passions weave the sorcery of the Stage, —
While Nature's sympathies are Art's best laws, —
To you a stranger has referr'd his cause: —
If the soft tale he woos the soul to hear
Bequeaths the moral, while it claims the tear,
Each gentler thought to faults in others shown
He calls in court — a pleader for his own!

THE DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

ACT I. — SCENE I.

Time, sunset. On the foreground an old Château; beyond Vineyards and Woods, which present, through their openings, Views of a River, reflecting the sunset. At a distance, the turrets of the Convent of the Carmelites.

MADAME and MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Mdlle. de la Vall. 'Tis our last eve, my mother!

Mme. de la Vall. Thou regrett'st it,
My own Louise! albeit the court invites thee —
A court beside whose glories, dull and dim
The pomp of Eastern kings, by poets told;
A court —

Mdlle. de la Vall. In which I shall not see my
mother!

Nor these old walls, in which, from every stone,
Childhood speaks eloquent of happy years;
Nor vines and woods, which bade me love the earth,
Nor yonder spires, which raised that love to God! —

[*The vesper bell tolls.*

The vesper bell! — my mother, when, once more,

I hear from those grey towers that holy chime,
May thy child's heart be still as full of Heaven,
And callous to all thoughts of earth, save those
Which mirror Eden in the face of Home!

Mme. de la Vall. Do I not know thy soul? —
through every snare

My gentle dove shall 'scape with spotless plumes
Alone in courts, I have no fear for *thee*:—
Some natures take from Innocence the lore
Experience teaches; and their delicate leaves,
Like the soft plant, shut out all wrong, and shrink
From vice by instinct, as the wise by knowledge:
And such is thine! *My* voice thou wilt not hear,
But Thought shall whisper where my voice would
warn,

And Conscience be thy mother and thy guide!

Mdlle. de la Vall. Oh, may I merit all thy care, and
most

Thy present trust! — Thou'l write to me, my mother,
And tell me of thyself: amidst the court
My childhood's images shall rise. Be kind
To the poor cotters in the wood; — alas!
They'll miss me in the winter! — and my birds? —
Thy hand will feed them? —

Mme de la Vall. And that noble heart
That loves thee as my daughter should be loved —
The gallant Bragelone?* — should I hear

* The author has, throughout this play, availed himself of the poetical license to give to the name of Bragelone the Italian pronunciation, and to accent the final *e*.

Some tidings Fame forgets — if in the din
Of camps I learn thy image makes his solace,
Shall I'not write of him? —

Mdlle. de la Vall. [with indifference]. His name will
breathe
Of home and friendship; — yes!

Mme. de la Vall. Of nought beside?

Mdlle. de la Vall. Nay, why so pressing? — let me
change the theme.

The king! — you have seen him; — is he, as they
say,
So fair — so stately?

Mme. de la Vall. Ay, in truth, my daughter,
A king that wins the awe he might command.
Splendid in peace, and terrible in war;
Wise in the council — gentle in the bower.

Mdlle. de la Vall. Strange, that so often through
mine early dreams
A royal vision flitted; — a proud form,
Upon whose brow nature had written “empire;”
While, on the lip, — love, smiling, wrapp'd in sun-
shine
The charmèd world that was its worshipper —
A form like that which clothed the gods of old,
Lured from Olympus by some mortal maid, —
Youthful it seemed — but with ambrosial youth;
And beautiful — but half as beauty were
A garb too earthly for a thing divine: —
Was it not strange, my mother?

Mme. de la Vall. A child's fancy,
Breathed into life by thy brave father's soul.
He taught thee, in thy cradle yet, to lisp
Thy sovereign's name in prayer — and still to-
gether,
In thy first infant creed, were link'd the lessons
“To HONOUR GOD AND LOVE THE KING;” it was
A part of that old knightly faith of France
Which made it half religion to be loyal.

Mdlle. de la Vall. It might be so. I have preserved
the lesson,
Ev'n with too weak a reverence. — Yet, 'tis strange!
A dream so oft renew'd! —

Mme. de la Vall. Here comes thy lover!
Thou wilt not blame him if his lips repeat
The question mine have ask'd? Alphonso, welcome!

SCENE II.

BRAGELONE, MADAME and MADEMOISELLE DE LA
VALLIÈRE.

Brage. My own Louise! — ah! dare I call thee
so?

War never seem'd so welcome! since we part,
Since the soft sunshine of thy smiles must fade
From these dear scenes, it soothes, at least to think
I shall not linger on the haunted spot,

And feel, forlorn amidst the gloom of absence,
How dark is all once lighted by thine eyes.

[MME. DE LA VALLIÈRE retires into the château.

Mdlle. de la Vall. Can friendship flatter thus? —
or wouldest thou train

My ear betimes to learn the courtier's speech?

Brage. Louise! Louise! this is our parting hour:
Me war demands — and thee the court allures.
In such an hour, the old romance allow'd
The maid to soften from her coy reserve,
And her true knight, from some kind words, to take
Hope's talisman to battle! — Dear Louise!
Say, canst thou love me? —

Mdlle. de la Vall. Sir! — I! — love! — methinks
It is a word that —

Brage. Sounds upon thy lips
Like "land" upon the mariner's, and speaks
Of home and rest after a stormy sea.
Sweet girl, my youth has pass'd in camps; and war
Hath somewhat scathed my manhood ere my time.
Our years are scarce well-mated: the soft spring
Is thine, and o'er my summer's waning noon
Grave autumn creeps. Thou say'st "I flatter!" —
well

Love taught me first the golden words in which
The honest heart still coins its massive ore.
But fairer words, from falser lips, will soon
Make my plain courtship rude. Louise! thy sire
Betroth'd us in thy childhood: I have watch'd thee

Bud into virgin May, and in thy youth
Have seem'd to hoard my own! — I think of *thee*
And I am youthful still! The passionate prayer —
The wild idolatry — the purple light
Bathing the cold earth from a Hebe's urn; —
Yea, all the soul's divine excess which youth
Claims as its own, came back when first I loved thee!
And yet so well I love, that if thy heart
Recoil from mine, — if but one single wish,
A shade more timid than the fear which ever
Blends trembling twilight with the starry hope
Of maiden dreams, would start thee from our union, —
Speak, and my suit is tongueless!

Mdlle. de la Vall. Oh, my lord!
If to believe all France's chivalry
Boasts not a nobler champion, — if to feel
Proud in your friendship, honour'd in your trust,
If this be love, and I have known no other,
Why then —

Brage. Why then, thou lov'st me!
Mdlle. de la Vall. [aside]. Shall I say it?
I feel 'twere to deceive him! Is it love?
Love, no, it is *not* love! — [Aloud.] My noble lord,
As yet I know not all mine own weak heart;
I would not pain thee, yet would not betray.
Legend and song have often painted love,
And my heart whispers not the love which should be
The answer to thine own: — thou hadst best forget
 me!

Brage. Forget!

Mdlle. de la Vall. I am not worthy of thee!

Brage. Hold! —

My soul is less heroic than I deem'd it.

Perchance my passion asks too much from thine
And would forestall the fruit ere yet the blossom
Blushes from out the coy and maiden leaves.

No! let *me* love; and say, perchance the time
May come when *thou* wilt bid me *not* forget thee.
Absence may plead my cause; it hath some magic;
I fear not contrast with the courtier-herd;
And thou art not Louise if thou art won
By a smooth outside and a honey'd tongue,
No! when thou seest these hunters after power,
These shadows, minion'd to the royal sun, —
Proud to the humble, servile to the great, —
Perchance thou'l learn how much one honest heart,
That never wrong'd a friend or shunn'd a foe, —
How much the old hereditary knighthood,
Faithful to God, to glory, and to love,
Outweighs a universe of cringing courtiers!
Louise, I ask no more! — I bide my time!

Re-enter MME. DE LA VALLIÈRE from the château.

Mme. de la Vall. The twilight darkens. Art thou,
now, Alphonso,

Convinced her heart is such as thou wouldest have it?

Brage. It is a heavenly tablet — but my name
Good angels have not writ there!

Mme. de la Vall. Nay, as yet,
Love wears the mask of friendship: she must love thee.

Brage. [half incredulously]. Think'st thou so?

Mme. de la Vall.

Ay, be sure!

Brage.

I'll think so too.

[Turns to MDLLE. DE LA VALLIÈRE.]

Bright lady of my heart! — [Aside.] By Heaven! 'tis true!

The rose grows richer on her cheek, like hues
That in the silence of the virgin dawn,
Predict, in blushes, light that glads the earth.
Her mother spoke aright; — ah, yes, she loves me!
Bright lady of my heart, farewell! and yet
Again — farewell!

Mdlle. de la Vall.

Honour and health be with
you!

Mme. de la Vall. Nay, my Louise, when warriors
wend to battle,

The maid they serve grows half a warrior too;
And does not blush to bind on mailed bosoms
The banner of her colours.

Brage.

Dare I ask it?

Mdlle. de la Vall. A soldier's child could never
blush, my lord,

To belt so brave a breast; — and yet, — well, wear it.

[Placing her scarf round BRAGELONE'S hauberk.]

Brage. Ah! add for thy sake.

Mdlle. de la Vall. For the sake of one
Who honours worth, and ne'er since Bayard fell,
Have banners flaunted o'er a knight more true
To France and Fame; —

Brage. And love?

Mdlle. de la Vall. Nay, hush, my lord;
I said not that.

Brage. But France and Fame shall say it
Yes, if thou hear'st men speak of Bragelone,
If proudest chiefs confess he bore him bravely,
Come life, come death, his glory shall be thine,
And all the light it borrow'd from thine eyes,
Shall gild thy name. Ah! scorn not *then* to say,
“He loved me well!” How well! God shield and bless
thee!

[*Exit BRAGELONE.*

Mdlle. de la Vall. [aside]. Most worthy love! *why*
can I love him not?

Mme. de la Vall. Peace to his gallant heart! when
next we meet,

May I have gain'd a son — and thou —

Mdlle. de la Vall. [quickly]. My mother,
This night let every thought be given to *thee!*
Beautiful scene, farewell! — farewell, my home!
And thou, grey convent, whose inspiring chime
Measures the hours with prayer, that morn and eve
Life may ascend the ladder of the angels,
And climb to heaven! serene retreats, farewell!
And now, my mother! — no! some hours must yet
Pass ere our parting.

Mme. de la Vall. Cheer thee, my Louise!
And let us now within; the dews are falling —

Mdlle. de la Vall. And I forgot how ill thy frame
may bear them.

Pardon! — within, within! —

[Stopping short, and gazing fondly on MME. DE LA
VALLIÈRE.]

Your hand, dear mother?

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

*An old Armoury, of the heavy French Architecture preceding
the time of Francis the First, in the Castle of BRAGELONE.
BERTRAND, the armourer, employed in polishing a sword.*

Bert. There now? I think this blade will scarcely
shame

My gallant master's hand; it was the weapon,
So legends say, with which the old Lord Rodolph
Slew, by the postern gate, his lady's leman!
Oh, we're a haughty race — we old French lords;
Our honour is unrusted as our steel,
And, when provoked, as ruthless!

Enter BRAGELONE.

Brage. Ah, old Bertrand!

Why, your brave spirit, 'mid these coats of mail,
Grows young again. So! this, then, is the sword
You'd have me wear. God wot! a trenchant blade,
Not of the modern fashion.

Bert. My good lord,
Yourself are scarcely of the modern fashon.
They tell me, that to serve one's king for nothing,
To deem one's country worthier than one's self,
To hold one's honour not a phrase to swear by, —
They tell me, now, all *this* is out of fashion.
Come, take the sword, my lord! — you have your
father's
Stout arm and lordly heart: they're out of fashion,
And yet you keep the one — come, take the other.

Brage. Why you turn satirist!

Ber. Satirist! what is that?

Brage. Satirists, my friend, are men who speak the
truth

That courts may say — they do not know the fashion!
Satire on Vice is Wit's revenge on fools
That slander Virtue. How now! look ye, Bertrand!
Methinks there is a notch here.

Ber. Ay, my lord;
I would not grind it out; — 'twas here the blade.
Clove through the helmet, ev'n unto the chin,
Of that irreverent and most scoundrel Dutchman
Who stabb'd you, through your hauberk-joints — what
time
You placed your breast before the king.

Brage. Hence, ever
Be it believed, that, in his hour of need,
A king's sole safeguard are his subjects' hearts!
Ha, ha! good sword! that was a famous stroke!

Thou didst brave deeds that day, thou quaint old servant,

Though now — thou'rt not the fashion.

Ber.

Bless that look,

And that glad laugh! they bring me back the day
When first old Bertrand arm'd you for the wars, —
A fair-faced stripling; yet, beshrew my heart,
You spurr'd that field before the bearded chins,
And saved the gallant Lord La Vallière's standard,
And yet you were a stripling then.

Brage.

La Vallière!

The very name goes dancing through my veins.
Bertrand, look round the armoury. Is there nought
I wore that first campaign? Nay, nay! no matter,
I wear the *name within me*. Hark ye, Bertrand!
We're not so young as then we were: when next
We meet, old friend, we both will end our labours,
And find some nook, amidst yon antique trophies,
Wherein to hang this idle mail.

Ber.

Huzza!

The village dames speak truth — my Lord will marry!
And I shall nurse, in these old wither'd arms,
Another boy — for France another hero.

Ha, ha! I am so happy.

Brage.

Good old man!

Why this is like my father's hall — since thus
My father's servants love me.

Ber.

All must love you!

Brage. All! — let me think so. [Bugle sounds.

Hark, the impatient bugle!

I hear the neigh of my exultant charger,
 Breathing from far the glorious air of war.
 Give me the sword!

Enter Servant, with a letter.

Her mother's hand! — “Louise,
 Arrived at court, writes sadly, and amidst
 The splendour pines for home,” — I knew she would!
 My own Louise! — “Speaks much of the king's good-
 ness;” —

Goodness to her! — that thought shall give the king
 A tenfold better soldier! — “From thy friend,
 Who trusts ere long to hail thee as her son.”
 Her son! — a blessed name. These lines shall be
 My heart's true shield and ward away each weapon.
 He who shall wed Louise has conquer'd Fate,
 And smiles at earthly foes! — Again the bugle!
 Give me your hand, old man. My fiery youth
 Went not to battle with so blithe a soul
 As now burns in me. So! she pines for home —
 I knew she would — I knew it! Farewell, Bertrand!

[*Exit BRAGELONE.*

Ber. Oh! there'll be merry doings in the hall
 When my dear lord returns! A merry wedding,
 And then — and then — oh, such a merry christening!
 How well I fancy his grave manly face
 Brightening upon his first-born.

[*As he is going.*

Re-enter BRAGELONE.

Ber. You, my lord! the woodbine?

Brage. Yes; see it duly done. I know she loves it;
It clammers round her lattice. I would not
Have one thing absent she could miss.

Remember!

[*Exit BRAGELONE.*]

Ber. And this is he whom warriors call "the Stern!"
The dove's heart beats beneath that lion breast.
Pray Heaven his lady may deserve him! Oh,
What news for my good dame! — i' faith, I'm glad
I was the first to learn the secret. So,
This year a wife — next year a boy! I'll teach
The young rogue how his father clove the Dutchman
Down to the chin! Ha, ha! old Bertrand now
Will be of use again on winter nights, —
I know he'll be the picture of his father.

[Exit BERTRAND.

SCENE IV.

An Antechamber in the Palace of Fontainebleau.

Enter LAUZUN and GRAMMONT at opposite doors.

Lau. Ah, Count, good day! Were you at court last night?

Gram. Yes; and the court has grown the richer by A young new beauty.

Lau. So! — her name?

Gram. La Vallière.

Lau. Ay, I have heard; — a maid of honour?

Gram. Yes.

The women say she's plain.

Lau. The women! oh,

The case it is that's plain — *she* must be lovely.

Gram. The dear, kind gossips of the court declare The pretty novice hath conceived a fancy —
A wild, romantic, innocent, strange fancy —
For our young king; a girlish love, like that
Told of in fairy tales: she saw his picture,
Sigh'd to the canvas, murmur'd to the colours,
And — fell in love with carmine and gambouge.

Lau. The simple dreamer! Well, she saw the king?

Gram. And while she saw him, like a rose, when May

Breathes o'er its bending bloom, she seem'd to shrink

Into her modest self, and a low sigh
Shook blushes (sweetest rose-leaves!) from her beauty.

Lau. You paint it well.

Gram. And ever since that hour
She bears the smiling malice of her comrades
With an unconscious and an easy sweetness;
As if alike *her* virtue and *his* greatness
Made love impossible: so, down the stream
Of purest thought, her heart glides on to danger.

Lau. Did Louis note her? — Has he heard the
gossip?

Gram. Neither, methinks: his Majesty is cold.
The art of pomp, and not the art of love,
Tutors his skill — Augustus more than Ovid.

Lau. The time will come. The king as yet is
young,
Flush'd with the novelty of sway, and fired
With the great dream of cutting Dutchmen's throats:
A tiresome dream — the poets call it "Glory."

Gram. So much the better, — 'tis one rival less;
The handsome king would prove a dangerous suitor.

Lau. Oh, hang the danger! He must have a
mistress;
'Tis an essential to a court: how many
Favours, one scarcely likes to ask a king,
One flatters from a king's *inamorata*!
We courtiers fatten on the royal vices;
And, while the king lives chaste, he cheats, he robs me
Of ninety-nine per cent!

Gram. Ha, ha! Well, duke,

We meet again to-night. You join the revels?
Till then, adieu.

Lau. Adieu, dear count.

[*Exit GRAMMONT.*

The king

Must have a mistress: I must lead that mistress.
The times are changed! — 'twas by the sword and
spear
Our fathers bought ambition — vulgar butchers!
But now our wit's our spear — intrigue our armour;
The antechamber is our field of battle;
And the best hero is — the cleverest rogue?

[*Exit LAUZUN.*

SCENE V.

Night — the Gardens of Fontainebleau, brilliantly illuminated with coloured lamps — Fountains, vases, and statues in perspective — A pavilion in the background — to the right the Palace of Fontainebleau, illuminated. Enter Courtiers, Ladies, &c.*

A Dance.

Enter LOUIS followed by Courtiers, &c.

Louis. Fair eve and pleasant revels to you all!
Ah, Duke! — a word with you.

[Courtiers give way.

* The effect of the scene should be principally made by jets-d'eau, waterfalls, &c.

Thou hast seen, my Lauzun,
The new and fairest floweret of our court,
This youngest of the graces — sweet La Vallière,
Blushing beneath the world's admiring eyes?

Lau. [Aside]. (So, so! — he's caught!) Your Majesty speaks warmly;
Your praise is just — and grateful —

Louis.

Grateful?

Lau.

Ay.

Know you not, Sire, it is the jest, among
The pretty prattlers of the royal chamber,
That this young Dian of the woods has found
Endymion in a king, — a summer dream,
Bright, but with vestal fancies! — scarcely love,
But that wild interval of hopes and fears
Through which the child glides, trembling, to the
woman?

Louis. Blest thought! Oh, what a picture of
delight
Your words have painted! —

Lau. While we speak, behold,
Through yonder alleys, with her sister planets,
Your moonlight beauty gleams.

Louis. 'Tis she! — this shade
Shall hide us! — quick —

[Enters one of the bosquets.]

Lau. [following him]. I trust my creditors
Will grow the merrier from this night's adventure.

Enter Mdlle. de la Vallière and Maids of Honour.

First Maid. How handsome looks the Duke de Guiche to-night!

Second Maid. Well, to my taste, the graceful Grammont bears

The bell from all! —

Third Maid. But, then, that charming Lauzun Has so much wit.

First Maid. And which, of all these gallants, May please the fair La Vallière most?

Mdlle. de la Vall. In truth, I scarcely mark'd them; when the king is by, Who can have eye, or ear, or thought for others?

First Maid. You raise your fancies high!

Second Maid. And raise them vainly! The king despairs all love!

Mdlle. de la Vall. Who spoke of love? The sunflower, gazing on the Lord of heaven, Asks but its sun to shine! — Who spoke of love? And who would wish the bright and lofty Louis To stoop from glory? Love should not confound So great a spirit with the herd of men. Who spoke of love? —

First Maid. My country friend, you talk Extremely well; but some young lord will teach you To think of Louis less, and more of love.

Mdlle. de la Vall. Nay, ev'n the very presence of his greatness

Exalts the heart from each more low temptation.
He seems to walk the earth as if to raise
And purify our wandering thoughts, by fixing
Thought on himself; — and she who thinks on Louis
Shuts out the world, and scorns the name of love!

First Maid. Wait till you're tried — [Music.]

But, hark! the music chides us
For wasting this most heavenly night so idly.
Come! let us join the dancers.

[*Exeunt Maids.*]

[As LA VALLIÈRE follows, the King steals from the
bosquet, and takes her hand, while LAUZUN retires in
the opposite direction.]

Louis. Sweet La Vallière!

Mdlle. de la Vall. Ah! —

Louis. Nay, fair lady, fly not, ere we welcome
Her who gives night its beauty!

Mdlle. de la Vall. Sire, permit me!

My comrades wait me.

Louis. What! my loveliest subject
So soon a rebel? Silent! — Well, be mute,
And teach the world the eloquence of blushes.

Mdlle. de la Vall. I may not listen —

Louis. What if I had set

Thyself the example? What if I had listen'd,
Veil'd by yon friendly boughs, and dared to dream
That one blest word which spoke of Louis absent
Might charm his presence, and make Nature music?

Mdlle. de la Vall. You did not, Sire! you could not!

Louis. Could not hear thee,
Nor pine for these divine, unwitness'd moments,
To pray thee, dearest lady, to divorce
No more the thought of love from him who loves thee
And — faithful still to glory — swears thy heart
Unfolds the fairest world a king can conquer!
Hear me, Louise!

Mdlle. de la Vall. No, Sire; forget those words!
I am not what their foolish meaning spoke me,
But a poor simple girl, who loves her king,
And honour *more*. Forget, and do not scorn me!

[*Exit Mdlle. de la Vallière.*

Louis. Her modest coyness fires me more than all
Her half-unconscious and most virgin love.

*Enter Courtiers, Ladies, Guests, &c.: LAUZUN,
GRAMMONT, and MONTESPAN.*

Well, would the dancers pause awhile?

Lau. Ev'n pleasure
Wearies at last.

Louis. We've but to change its aspect,
And it resumes its freshness. Ere the banquet
Calls us, my friends, we have prepared a game
To shame the lottery of this life, wherein
Each prize is neighbour'd by a thousand blanks.
Methinks it is the duty of a monarch
To set the balance right, and bid the wheel
Shower nought but prizes on the hearts he loves.

What ho, there! with a merry music, raise
Fortune, to show how Merit conquers Honours!

[*Music.*]

[The Pavilion at the back of the stage opens, and discovers the Temple of Fortune superbly illuminated. Fortune; at her feet, a wheel of light; at either hand, a golden vase, over each of which presides a figure — the one representing Merit, the other Honour.

Louis. Approach, fair dames and gallants! Aye,
as now,
May Fortune smile upon the friends of Louis!

*[The Courtiers and Ladies group around the vases.
From the one over which Merit presides they draw lots,
and receive in return from Honour various gifts of
jewels, &c.*

Enter MDLLE. DE LA VALLIÈRE at the back of the stage.

Louis [to *Mdlle. de la Vall.*] Nay, if you smile not
on me, then the scene
Hath lost its charm.

Mdlle. de la Vall. Oh, Sire, all eyes are on us!

Louis. All eyes should learn where homage should
be render'd.

Mdlle. de la Vall. I pray you, Sire —

Lau. Will't please your Majesty
To try your fortune?

Louis. Fortune! Sweet La Vallière,
I only seek my fortune in thine eyes.

[*Music.* Louis draws, and receives a diamond bracelet.
Ladies crowd round.

First Lady. How beautiful!

Second Lady. Each gem were worth a duchy!

Third Lady. Oh, happy she upon whose arm the
king

Will bind the priceless band!

Louis [approaching Mdlle. de la Vall.]. Permit me, lady.

[*Clasps the bracelet.*

Lau. Well done — well play'd! In that droll game
call'd Woman,

Diamonds are always trumps for hearts.

First Lady. Her hair's

Too light!

Second Lady. Her walk is so provincial!

Third Lady. D'ye think she paints?

Lau. Ha, ha! What envious eyes,
What fawning smiles, await the king's new mistress!

ACT II. — SCENE I.

*The Gardens of Fontainebleau.**Enter BRAGELONE.*

Brage. Why did we suffer her to seek the court?
It is a soil in which the reptile Slander
Still coils in slime around the fairest flower.
Can it be true? — Strange rumours pierced my tent
Coupling her name with — pah! — how foul the
thought is! —
The maid the king loves! — Fie! I'll not believe it!
I left the camp — sped hither: if she's lost,
Why then! — down — down, base heart! wouldst thou
suspect her?
Thou — who shouldst be her shelter from suspicion?
But I may warn, advise, protect, and save her —
Save — 'tis a fearful word!

Enter LAUZUN.

Lau. Lord Bragelone!
Methought your warrior spirit never breathed
The air of palaces! No evil tidings,
I trust, from Dunkirk?

Brage. No. The *fleur-de-lis*

Rears her white crest unstain'd. Mine own affairs
Call me to court.

Lau. Affairs! I hate the word;
It sounds like debts.

Brage. [Aside]. This courtier may instruct me.
[Aloud.] Our king — he bears him well?

Lau. Oh, bravely, Marquis;
Engaged with this new palace of Versailles.
It costs some forty millions!

Brage. Ay, the People
Groan at the burthen.

Lau. People! — what's the *People*?
I never heard that word at court! The *People*!

Brage. I doubt not, duke. The *People*, like the
Air,
Is rarely heard, save when it speaks in thunder.
I pray you grace for that old-fashion'd phrase.
What is the latest news?

Lau. His Majesty
Dines half an hour before his usual time.
That's the last news at court! — it makes sensation!

Brage. Is there no weightier news? I heard at
Dunkirk
How the king loved a — loved a certain maiden —
The brave La Vallière's daughter.

Lau. How, my lord,
How can you vegetate in such a place?
I fancy the next tidings heard at Dunkirk
Will be that — Adam's dead!

Brage. The news is old, then?

Lau. News! news, indeed! Why, by this time,
our lackeys
Have worn the gossip threadbare. News! —

Brage. The lady
(She is a soldier's child) hath not yet barter'd
Her birthright for ambition? She rejects him?
Speak! — She rejects him?

Lau. Humph!
Brage. Oh, duke, I know
This courtier air — this most significant silence —
With which your delicate race are wont to lie
Away all virtue! Shame upon your manhood!
Speak out, and say Louise La Vallière lives
To prove to courts — that woman *can* be honest!

Lau. Marquis, you're warm.
Brage. You dare not speak; — I knew it!
Lau. Dare not?
Brage. Oh, yes, you dare, with hints and smiles,
To darken fame — to ruin the defenceless —
Blight with a gesture — wither with a sneer!
Did I say "dare not?" — No man dares it better!

Lau. My lord, these words must pass not!
Brage. Duke, forgive me!
I am a rough, stern soldier — taught from youth
To brave offence, and by the sword alone
Maintain the license of my speech. Oh, say —
Say but one word! — say this poor maid is sinless,
And, for her father's sake — (*her father loved me!*)
I'll kneel to thee for pardon!

Lau. Good, my lord,

I know not your interest in this matter:
'Tis said that Louis loves the fair La Vallière;
But what of that? — good taste is not a crime!
'Tis said La Vallière does not hate the king;
But what of that? — it does but prove her — loyal!
I know no more. I trust you're satisfied;
If not — —

Brage. Thou liest!

Lau. Nay, then, draw!

[They fight — after a few passes, LAUZUN is disarmed.

Brage. There, take
Thy sword. Alas! each slanderer wears a weapon
No honest arm can baffle — *this* is edgeless.

[Exit BRAGELONE.

Lau. Pleasant! This comes, now, of one's con-
descending
To talk with men who cannot understand
The tone of good society. Poor fellow!

[Exit LAUZUN.

SCENE II.

Enter MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Mdlle. de la Vall. He loves me, then! He loves
me! Love! wild word!
Did I say love? Dishonour, shame, and crime
Dwell on the thought! And yet — and yet — *he loves me!*

[Re-enter BRAGELONE, at the back of the stage. — She
takes out the King's picture.

Mine early dreams were prophets! — Steps! The king?

Brage. No, lady; pardon me; — a joint mistake;
You sought the king — and *I Louise la Vallière!*

Mdlle. de la Vall. You here, my lord! — you here!

Brage. There was a maiden

Fairer than many fair; but sweet and humble,
And good and spotless, through the vale of life
She walk'd, her modest path with blessings strew'd
(For all men bless'd her); from her crystal name,
Like the breath i' the mirror, even envy pass'd:
I sought that maiden at the court; none knew her.
May I ask you — where now Louise la Vallière?

Mdlle. de la Vall. Cruel! — unjust! You were my
father's friend,

Dare you speak thus to me?

Brage. Dare! dare! — 'Tis well.
You have learnt your state betimes! —

Mdlle. de la Vall. My state, my lord!
I know not by what right you thus assume
The privilege of insult!

Brage. Ay, reproach!
The harlot's trick — for shame! Oh, no, your pardon!
You are too high for shame: and so — farewell!

Mdlle. de la Vall. My lord! — my lord, in pity —
No! — *in justice*,
Leave me not thus!

Brage. Louise!

Mdlle. de la Vall. Have they belied me?
Speak, my good lord! — What crime have I committed?

Brage. No crime — at courts! 'Tis only Heaven
and Honour

That deem it aught but — most admired good fortune!
Many, who swept in careless pride before
The shrinking, spotless, timorous La Vallière,
Will now fawn round thee, and with bended knees
Implore sweet favour of the king's kind mistress.
Ha, ha! — this is not crime! Who calls it crime?
Do prudes say "Crime?" Go, bribe them, and they'll
swear

Its name is greatness. Crime, indeed! — ha, ha!

Mdlle. de la Vall. My heart finds words at length!
— 'Tis false!

Brage. 'Tis false!

Why, speak again! Say once more it is false —
'Tis false! — again, 'tis false!

Mdlle. de la Vall. Alas, I'm wretched!

Brage. No, lady, no! not wretched, if not guilty!

[MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE after walking to and
fro in great agitation, seats herself on one of the
benches of the garden, and covers her face with her
hands.

Brage. [Aside]. Are these the tokens of remorse?
No matter!

I loved her well! And love is pride, not love,
If it forsake ev'n guilt amidst its sorrows!

[Aloud.] Louise! Louise! — Speak to thy friend, Louise!
Thy father's friend! — thine own!

Mdlle. de la Vall. This hated court!
Why came I hither? Wherefore have I closed

My heart against its own most pleading dictates?
Why clung to virtue, if the brand of vice
Sear my good name?

Brage. That, when thou pray'st to Heaven,
Thy soul may ask for *comfort* — not *forgiveness!*

Mdlle. de la Vall. [rising eagerly]. A blessed thought!
I thank thee!

Brage. Thou art innocent!
Thou hast denied the king?

Mdlle. de la Vall. I have denied him.

Brage. Curst be the lies that wrong'd thee! —
doubly curst

The hard, the icy selfishness of soul,
That, but to pander to an hour's caprice,
Blasted that flower of life — fair fame! Accurst
The king who casts his purple o'er his vices!

Mdlle. de la Vall. Hold! — thou malign'st thy king!

Brage. He spared not thee.

Mdlle. de la Vall. The king — Heaven bless him!

Brage. Wouldst thou madden me?
Thou! — No — thou lov'st him not? — thou hid'st thy
face!

Woman, thou tremblest! Lord of Hosts, for this
Hast thou preserved me from the foeman's sword,
And through the incarnadined and raging seas
Of war upheld me? — made both life and soul
The sleepless priests to that fair idol — Honour?
Was it for this? I loved thee not, Louise,
As gallants love! Thou wert this life's IDEAL,
Breathing through earth the Lovely and the Holy,

And clothing Poetry in human beauty!
When in this gloomy world they spoke of sin,
I thought of thee, and smiled — for thou wert sinless!
And when they told of some diviner act
That made our nature noble, my heart whisper'd —
“So would have done Louise!” — “Twas thus I loved
thee!

To lose thee, I can bear it; but to lose,
With thee, all hope, all confidence, of virtue —
This — *this* is hard! — Oh! I am sick of earth!

Mdlle. de la Vall. Nay, speak not thus; — be gentle
with me. Come,

I am not what thou deem'st me, Bragelone;
Woman I am, and weak. Support, advise me!
Forget the lover, but be still the friend.
Do not desert me — *thou*!

Brage. Thou lov'st the king!

Mdlle. de la Vall. But I can fly from love.

Brage. Poor child! And whither?

Mdlle. de la Vall. Take me to the old castle, to
my mother.

Brage. The king can reach thee there!

Mdlle. de la Vall. He'll not attempt it.
Alas! in courts, how quickly men forget!

Brage. Not till their victim hath surrender'd all!
Hadst thou but yielded, why thou might'st have lived
Beside his very threshold, safe, unheeded;
But thus, with all thy bloom of heart unrifled, —
The fortress storm'd, not conquer'd, — why man's pride,
If not man's lust, would shut thee from escape!

Art thou in earnest, — wouldest thou truly fly
From gorgeous infamy to tranquil honour,
God's house alone may shelter thee!

Mdlle. de la Vall. The convent!
Alas! alas! to meet those eyes no more!
Never to hear that voice!

Brage. [departing]. Enough.

Mdlle. de la Vall. Yet, stay!
I'll see him once! one last farewell — and then —
Yes, to the convent!

Brage. I have done! — and yet,
Ere I depart, take back the scarf thou gav'st me.
Then didst "thou honour worth!" now, gift and giver
Alike are worthless.

Mdlle. de la Vall. Worthless! Didst thou hear me?
Have I not said that —

Brage. Thou wouldest see the king!
Vice first, and virtue after! O'er the marge
Of the abyss thou tremblest. One step more,
And from all heaven the Angels shall cry "*Lost!*"
Thou ask'st that single step! Wouldest thou be saved?
Lose not a moment. — Come!

Mdlle. de la Vall. [in great agony]. Beside that tree,
When stars shone soft, he vow'd for aye to love me!

Brage. Think of thy mother! At this very hour
She blesses Heaven that thou wert born — the last
Fair scion of a proud and stainless race.
To-morrow, and thy shame may cast a shade
Over a hundred 'scutcheons, and thy mother

Feel thou wert born that *she* might long to die!
Come!

Mdlle. de la Vall. I am ready — take my hand.
[*Her eye falls on the bracelet.*
Away!

This is his gift! And shall I leave him thus?
Not one kind word to break the shock of parting —

Brage. And break a mother's heart!

Mdlle. de la Vall. Be still! Thou'rt man!
Thou canst not feel as woman feels! — her weakness
Thou canst not sound. O Louis, Heaven protect thee!
May fate look on thee with La Vallière's eyes!
Now I am ready, sir. Thou'st seen how weak
Woman is ever where she loves. Now, learn,
Proportion'd to that weakness is the strength
With which she conquers love! O Louis, Louis!
Quick! take me hence!

Brage. The heart she wrongs hath saved her!
And is that all! — The shelter for mine age —
The Hope that was the garner for Affection —
The fair and lovely tree, beneath whose shade
The wearied soldier thought to rest at last,
And watch life's sun go calm and cloudless down,
Smiling the day to sleep — all, all lie shatter'd!
No matter. I have saved thy soul from sorrow,
Whose hideous depth thy vision cannot fathom.
Joy! — I have saved thee!

Mdlle. de la Vall. Ah! when last we parted
I told thee, of thy love I was not worthy.
Another shall replace me!

Brage. [smiling sadly]. Hush! Another!
No! — See, I wear thy colours still! Though Hope
Wanes from the plate, the dial still remains,
And takes no light from stars! I — I am nothing!
But thou — Nay, weep not! Yet these tears are honest:
Thou hast not lived to make the Past one blot,
Which life in vain would weep away! Poor maiden!
I could not cheer thee *then*. Now, joy! I've saved thee!

[*Exeunt* MDLLE. DE LA VALLIÈRE and BRAGELONE.]

SCENE III.

The King's Cabinet at Fontainebleau; the King seated at a table, covered with papers, &c., writing.*

Enter LAUZUN.

Louis. Lauzun, I sent for you. Your zeal has served me,
And I am grateful. There, this order gives you
The lands and lordship of De Vesci.

Lau. Sire,
How shall I thank your goodness?

Louis. Hush! — by silence!

Lau. [aside]. A king's forbidden fruit has pretty windfalls!

* To some it may be interesting to remember that this cabinet, in which the most powerful of the Bourbon kings is represented as rewarding the minister of his pleasures, is the same as that in which is yet shown the table upon which Napoleon Bonaparte (son of a gentleman of Corsica) signed the abdication of the titles and dominions of Charlemagne!

Louis. This beautiful Louise! I never loved
Till now.

Lau. She yields not yet?

Louis. But gives refusal
A voice that puts ev'n passion to the blush
To own one wish so soft a heart denies it!

Lau. A woman's No! is but a crooked path
Unto a woman's Yes! Your Majesty
Saw her to-day?

Louis. No! — Grammont undertakes
To bear, in secret, to her hand, some lines
That pray a meeting. — I await his news.

[Continues writing.

Lau. [aside]. I'll not relate my tilt with Bragelone.
First, I came off the worst. — No man of sense
Ever confesses that! And secondly,
This most officious, curious, hot-brain'd Quixote
Might make him jealous; jealous kings are peevish;
And, if he fall to questioning the lady,
She'll learn who told the tale, and spite the teller.
Oh! the great use of logic!

Louis. 'Tis in vain
I strive by business to beguile impatience!
How my heart beats! — Well, count!

Enter GRAMMONT.

Gram. Alas, my liege!

Louis. Alas! — Speak out!

Gram. The court has lost La Vallière!

Louis. Ha! — lost!

Gram. She has fled, and none guess whither.

Louis. Fled!

I'll not believe it! — Fled!

Lau. What matters, sire?

No spot is sacred from the king!

Louis. By Heaven

I am a king! — Not all the arms of Europe

Could wrest one jewel from my crown. And she —

What is my crown to her! I am a king!

Who stands between the king and her he loves

Becomes a traitor — and may find a tyrant!

Follow me!

[*Exit LOUIS.*]

Gram. Who e'er heard of maids of honour
Flying from kings?

Lau. Ah, had you been a maid,
How kind you would have been, you rogue! — Come
on!

[*Exeunt LAUZUN and GRAMMONT.*]

SCENE IV.

*The Cloisters of a Convent — Night — Thunder and Lightning,
the latter made visible through the long oriel windows.*

Mdlle. de la Vall. [rising]. Darkly the night sweeps
on. No thought of sleep
Steals to my heart. What sleep is to the world
Prayer is to me — life's balm, and grief's oblivion!

Yet, ev'n before the altar of my God,
Unhallow'd fire is raging through my veins —
Heav'n on my lips, but earth within my heart —
And while I pray *his* memory prompts the prayer,
And all I ask of Heaven is — “Guard my Louis!”
Forget him — *that* I dare not pray! I would not,
Ev'n if I could, be happy, and forget him!

[*Thunder.*

Roll on, roll on, dark chariot of the storm,
Whose wheels are thunder! — the rack'd elements
Can furnish forth no tempest like the war
Of passions in one weak and erring heart!

[*The bell tolls one.*

Hark to night's funeral knell! How through the roar
Of winds and thunder thrills that single sound,
Solemnly audible! — the tongue of time,
In time's most desolate hour! — it bids us muse
On worlds which love can reach not! Life runs fast
To its last sands! To bed, to bed! — to tears
And wishes for the grave! to bed, to bed!

[*A trumpet is heard without.*

Two or three Nuns hurry across the stage.

First Nun. Most strange!

Second Nun. In such a night, too! The great
gates,

That ne'er unclose save to a royal guest,
Unbarr'd!

Mdlle. de la Vall. What fear, what hope, by turns
distracts me!

[*The trumpet sounds again.*

First Nun. Hark! in the court, the ring of hoofs!
— the door

Creaks on the sullen hinge!

Lau. [without]. Make way! — the king!

Enter LOUIS and LAUZUN.

Mdlle. de la Vall. [rushing forward]. Oh, Louis! —
oh, beloved! [Then pausing abruptly.] No,
touch me not!

Leave me! in pity leave me! Heavenly Father,
I fly to thee! Protect me from his arms —
Protect me from myself!

Louis. Oh bliss! — Louise!

Enter Abbess and other Nuns.

Abbess. Peace, peace! What clamour desecrates
the shrine
And solitudes of God?

Lau. Madam, your knee —
The king!

Abbess. The king! — you mock me, sir!

Louis [quitting MDLLE. DE LA VALLIÈRE]. Behold
Your sovereign, reverend mother! We have come
To thank you for your shelter of this lady,
And to reclaim our charge.

Abbess. My liege, these walls
Are sacred even from the purple robe
And sceptred hand.

Louis. She hath not ta'en the vow!
She's free! — we claim her! she is of our court!
Woman, — go to!

Abbess. The maiden, sire, is free!
Your royal lips have said it! — She is free!
And if this shrine her choice, whoe'er compels her
Forth from the refuge, doth incur the curse
The Roman Church awards to even kings!
Speak, lady! — dost thou claim against the court
The asylum of the cloister?

Louis. Darest thou brave us?
Lau. [aside to *Louis*]. Pardon, my liege! — reflect!
Let not the world
Say that the king —
Louis. Can break his bonds! — Away!
I was a man before I was a king!

[Approaching MDLLE. DE LA VALLIÈRE.
Lady, we do command your presence! [Lowering his
voice.] Sweet!
Adored Louise! — if ever to your ear
My whispers spoke in music — if my life
Be worth the saving, do not now desert me!
Mdlle. de la Vall. Let me not hear him, Heaven! —
Strike all my senses!
Make — make me dumb, deaf, blind, — but keep me
honest!

Abbess. Sire, you have heard her answer!

Louis [advancing passionately, pauses, and then with great dignity].
Abbess, no!

This lady was intrusted to our charge —
A fatherless child! — The king is now her father!
Madam, we would not wrong you; but we know
That sometimes most unhallow'd motives wake
Your zeal for converts! — This young maid is wealthy,
And nobly born! — Such proselytes may make
A convent's pride, but oft a convent's victims!
No more! — we claim the right the law awards us
Free and alone to commune with this maiden.
If then her choice go with you — be it so;
We are no tyrant! Peace! — retire!

Abbess. My liege!
Forgive —

Louis. We do! Retire!

[LAUZUN, the Abbess, &c., withdraw.

Louis. We are alone!

Mdlle. de la Vall. Alone! — No, God is present,
and the conscience!

Louis. Ah! fear'st thou, then, that heart that would
resign
Ev'n love itself to guard one pang from thee?

Mdlle. de la Vall. I must speak! — Sire, if every
drop of blood
Were in itself a life, I'd shed them all
For one hour's joy to thee! — But fame and virtue —

My father's grave — my mother's lonely age —
These, these — [Thunder.

I hear their voice! — the fires of Heaven
Seem to me like the eyes of angels, and
Warn me against myself! — Farewell!

Louis. Louise,
I will not hear thee! What! farewell! that word
Sounds like a knell to all that's worth the living!
Farewell! why, then, farewell all peace to Louis,
And the poor king is once more but a thing
Of state and forms. The impulse and the passion —
The blessed air of happy human life —
The all that made him envy not his subjects,
Dies in that word! Ah, canst thou — dar'st thou say it?

Mdlle. de la Vall. Oh, speak not thus! — Speak
harshly! threat, command! —
Be all the king!

Louis. The king! he kneels to thee!
Mdlle. de la Vall. I'm weak — be generous! My
own soul betrays me;
But *thou* betray me not!

Louis. Nay, hear me, sweet one!
Desert me not this once, and I will swear
To know no guiltier wish — to curb my heart —
To banish hope from love — and nurse no dream
Thy spotless soul itself shall blush to cherish!
Hear me, Louise — thou lov'st me?

Mdlle. de la Vall. Love thee, Louis!

Louis. Thou lov'st me, — then confide! Who loves,
trusts ever!

Mdlle de la Vall. Trust thee! — ah! dare I?

Louis [*clasping her in his arms*]. Ay, till death!
What ho!

Lauzun! I say!

Enter LAUZUN.

Mdlle. de la Vall. No, no!

Louis. Not trust me, dearest?

[*She falls on his shoulder — the Abbess and Nuns advance.*

Abbess. Still firm!

Lau. No, madam! — Way there for the king!

ACT III. — SCENE I

An Antechamber in the Palace of MADAME LA DUCHESSE DE LA VALLIÈRE at Versailles.

*Enter LAUZUN and MADAME DE MONTESPAN
at opposite doors.*

Lau. Ha! my fair friend, well met! — how fares Athenè?

Mme. de Mon. Weary with too much gaiety! Now, tell me,

Do *you* ne'er tire of splendour? Does this round Of gaudy pomps — this glare of glitt'ring nothings — Does it ne'er pall upon you? To my eyes 'Tis as the earth would be if turf'd with scarlet, Without one spot of green.

Lau. We all feel thus Until we are used to it. Art has grown *my* nature, And if I see green fields, or ill-dress'd people, I cry "How artificial!" With me, "*Nature*" Is "Paris and Versailles." The word, "a man," Means something noble, that one sees at court. Woman 's the thing Heaven made for wearing trinkets And talking scandal. That's my state of nature!

You'll like it soon; you have that temper which
Makes courts its element.

Mme. de Mon. And how? — define, sir.

Lau. First, then — but shall I not offend?

Mme de Mon. Be candid.

I'd know my faults, to make them look like virtues.

Lau. First, then, Athenè, you've an outward
frankness.

Deceit in you looks honester than truth.

Thoughts, at court, like faces on the stage,
Require some rouge. You rouge your thoughts so well,
That one would deem their only fault, that nature
Gave them too bright a bloom!

Mme de Mon. Proceed!

Lau.

Your wit

Is of the true court breed — it plays with nothings;
Just bright enough to warm, but never burn —

Excites the dull, but ne'er offends the vain.

You have much energy; it looks like feeling!

Your cold ambition seems an easy impulse;

Your head most ably counterfeits the heart,

But never, like the heart, betrays itself!

Oh! you'll succeed at court! — you see I know you!

Not so this new-made duchess — young La Vallière.

Mme de Mon. The weak, fond fool!

Lau. Yes, weak — *she* has a heart;
Yet *you*, too, love the king!

Mme de Mon. And she does *not*!

She loves but *Louis* — I but love the *king*:
Pomp, riches, state, and power — these, who would
love not?

Lau. Bravo! well said! — Oh, you'll succeed at
court!

I knew it well! it was for this I chose you —
Induced your sapient lord to waste no more
Your beauty in the shade — for this prepared
The duchess to receive you to her bosom,
Her dearest friend; for this have duly fed
The king's ear with your praise, and clear'd your way
To rule a sovereign and to share a throne.

Mme. de Mon. I know thou hast been my architect
of power;

And, when the pile is built —

Lau. [with a smile]. Could still o'erthrow it,
If thou couldst play the ingrate!

Mme. de Mon. I! — nay!

Lau. Hear me!

Each must have need of each. Long live the king!
Still let this temples ache beneath the crown.
But all that kings can give — wealth, rank, and
power —

Must be for *us* — the king's friend and his favourite.

Mme. de Mon. But is it easy to supplant the
duchess?

All love La Vallière! Her meek nature shrinks
Ev'n from our homage; and she wears her state
As if she pray'd the world to pardon greatness.

Lau. And thus destroys herself! At court, Athenè,

Vice, to win followers, takes the front of virtue,
And looks the dull plebeian things called *moral*
To scorn, until they blush to be unlike her.
Why is De Lauzun not her friend? Why plotting
For a new rival? Why? — Because De Lauzun
Wins not the power he look'd for from her friendship!
She keeps not old friends! — and she makes no new
ones!

For who would be a friend to one who deems it
A crime to ask his Majesty a favour?

“*Friends*” is a phrase at court that means *Promotion*!

Mme. de Mon. Her folly, I confess, would not be
mine,

But, grant her faults — the king still loves the
duchess!

Lau. Since none are by, I'll venture on a treason,
And say, the king's a man! — and men will change!
I have his ear, and you shall win his eye.
'Gainst a new face, and an experienced courtier,
What chance hath this poor, loving, simple woman?
Besides, she has too much conscience for a king!
He likes not to look up, and feel how low,
Ev'n on the throne that overlooks the world,
His royal greatness dwarfs beside that heart
That never stoop'd to sin, save when it loved him!

Mme. de Mon. You're eloquent, my lord!

Lau. Ah! of such natures
You and I know but little! — [Aside.] This must cease,
Or I shall all disclose my real aims!

[Aloud.] The king is with the duchess?

Mme. de Mon.

Yes.

Lau.

As yet

She doth suspect you not?

Mme. de Mon.

Suspect! — the puppet!

No; but full oft, her head upon my bosom,
Calls me her truest friend! — invites me ever
To amuse the king with my enlivening sallies; —
And still breaks off, in sighing o'er the past,
To wish her spirit were as blithe as mine,
And fears her Louis wearies of her sadness.

Lau. So, the plot ripens! — ere the king came
hither,

I had prepared his royal pride to chafe
At that sad face, whose honest sorrow wears
Reproach unconsciously! You'll learn the issue!
Now, then, farewell! — We understand each other!

[*Exit. LAUZUN.*

Mme. de Mon. And once I loved this man! — and
still might love him,
But that I love ambition! Yes, my steps
Now need a guide; but once upon the height,
And I will have no partner! Thou, lord duke,
With all thine insolent air of proud protection,
Thou shalt wait trembling on my nod, and bind
Thy fortune to my wheels! O man! — vain man!
Well sung the poet, — when this power of beauty
Heaven gave our sex, it gave the only sceptre
Which makes the world a slave! And I will wield it!

[*Exit MME DE MONTESPAN.*

SCENE II.

The scene opens and discovers the King, and the DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE at chess.

Louis. But one move more!

Duch. de la Vall. Not so! I check the king.

Louis. A vain attempt! — the king is too well guarded!

There, — check again! Your game is lost!

Duch. de la Vall. As usual,
Ev'n from this mimic stage of war you rise
Ever the victor.

[*They leave the table and advance.*

Louis. 'Twere a fairer fortune,
My own Louise, to reconcile the vanquish'd!

Duch. de la Vall. [sadly]. My best-loved Louis!
Louis. Why so sad a tone?

Nay, smile, Louise! — Love thinks himself aggrieved
If Care casts shadows o'er the heart it seeks
To fill with cloudless sunshine! Smile, Louise!
Ev'n unkind words were kinder than sad looks.

There — now thou gladd'st me!

Duch. de la Vall. Yet ev'n thou, methought,
Didst wear, this morn, a brow on which the light
Shone less serenely than its wont!

Louis. This morn!
Ay, it is true! — this morn I heard that France

Hath lost a subject monarchs well might mourn!
Oh! little know the world how much a king,
Whose life is past in *purchasing* devotion,
Loses in one who merited all favour
And scorn to ask the least! A king, Louise,
Sees but the lackeys of mankind. The true
Lords of your race — the high chivalric hearts —
Nature's nobility — alas, are proud,
And stand aloof, lest slaves should say they flatter
Of such a mould was he whom France deplores.

Duch. de la Vall. Tell me his name, that I, with
thee, may mourn him.

Louis. A noble name, but a more noble bearer
Not to be made by, but to make, a lineage.
Once, too, at Dunkirk, 'twixt me and the foe,
He thrust his gallant breast, already seamed
With warrior-wounds, and *his* blood flow'd for mine.
Dead! — his just merits all unrecompensed! —
Obscured, like sun-light, by the suppliant clouds!
He should have died a marshal! Death did wrong
To strike so soon! Alas, brave Bragelone!

Duch. de la Vall. Ha! — did I hear aright, my
liege — my Louis?
That name — that name! — thou saidst not
“Bragelone”?

Louis. Such was his name, not often heard at
court.
Thou didst not know him? What! thou art pale thou
weepest! —

Thou art ill! Louise, look up!

[*He leads her to a seat.*

Duch. de la Vall.

Be still, O Conscience!

I did not slay him! — Died *too soon!* Alas!

He should have died with all his hopes unblighted,
Ere I was — what I am!

Louis.

What mean these words?

Duch. de la Vall. How did death strike him? —
what disease?

Louis.

I know not.

He had retired from service; and in peace
Breathed out his soul to some remoter sky!
France only guards his fame! What was he to thee
That thou shouldst weep for him?

Duch. de la Vall. Hast thou ne'er heard
We were betrothed in youth?

Louis [*agitated and aside*]. Lauzun speaks truth!
I'd not her virgin heart — she loved another!
[Aloud.] Betrothed! You mourn him deeply!

Duch. de la Vall. Sire, I do.
That broken heart! — I was its dream — its idol!
And with regret is mingled — what repentance?

Louis [*coldly*]. Repentance, madam! Well, the
word is gracious!

Duch. de la Vall. Pardon! oh, pardon! But the
blow was sudden;

How can the heart play courtier with remorse?

Louis. Remorse! — again. Why be at once all
honest,
And say you love me not!

Duch. de la Vall. Not love you, Louis?

Louis. Not if you feel repentance to have loved!

Duch. de la Vall. What! think'st thou, Louis, I
should love thee more

Did I love virtue less, or less regret it?

Louis. I pray you truce with these heroic
speeches;

They please us in romance — in life they weary.

Duch. de la Vall. Louis, do I deserve this?

Louis. Rather, lady,
Do I deserve the mute reproach of sorrow?
Still less these constant, never-soothed complaints —
This waiting-woman jargon of "*lost virtue*."

Duch. de la Vall. Sire, this from you!

Louis. Why, oft, could others hear thee,
Well might they deem thee some poor village Phœbe,
Whom her false Lubin had deceived, and left,
Robb'd of her only dower! and not the great
Duchess la Vallière, in our realm of France
Second to none but our anointed race;
The envy of the beauty and the birth
Of Europe's court — our city of the world!
Is it so great disgrace, Louise la Vallière,
To wear, unrivall'd, in thy breast, the heart
Of Bourbon's latest, nor her least, of kings?

Duch. de la Vall. Sire, when you deigned to love
me, I had hoped
You knew the sunshine of your royal favour
Had fallen on a lowly flower. Let others
Deem that the splendour consecrates the sin!

I'd loved thee with as pure and proud a love,
If thou hadst been the poorest cavalier
That ever served a king — thou know'st it, Louis!

Louis. I would not have it so! my fame, my
glory,

The purple and the orb, are part of me;
And thou shouldst love them for my sake, and feel
I were not Louis were I less the king.
Still weeping! Fie! I tell thee tears freeze back
The very love I still would bear to thee!

Duch. de la Vall. "Would still!" — didst thou say
"still?"

Louis. Come, lady!

Woman, to keep her empire o'er the heart,
Must learn its nature — mould unto its bias —
And rule by never differing from our humours.

Duch. de la Vall. I'll school my features, teach my
lips to smile,

Be all thou wilt; but say not "still," dear Louis!

Louis. Well, well! no further words; let peace be
with us.

[*Aside.*] By Heaven, she weeps with yet intenser
passion!

It must be that she loved Bragelone,
And mourns the loftier fate that made her mine!

[*Aloud.*] This gallant soldier, madam, your betrothed,
Hath some share in your tears?

Duch. de la Vall. Oh, name him not;
My tears are all unworthy dews to fall
Upon a tomb so honour'd!

Louis.

Grant me patience!

These scenes are very tedious, fair La Vallière.
In truth, we kings have, in the council-chamber,
Enough to make us tearful; — in the bower
We would have livelier subjects to divert us.

Duch. de la Vall. Again forgive me! I am sick at
heart;

I pray you pardon; — these sad news have marr'd
The music of your presence, and have made me
Fit but for solitude. I pray you, sire,
Let me retire; and when again I greet you,
I'll wear the mien you'd have me!

Louis.

Be it so!

Let me no more disturb you from your thoughts;
They must be sad. So brave — and your betrothed!
Your grief becomes you.

Duch. de la Vall. You forgive me, Louis?
We do not part unkindly?*Louis.*

Fair one, no!

[*Exit LA VALLIÈRE.*

Louis. She was my first love, and my fondest. —
Was!

Alas, the word must come! — I love her yet,
But love wanes glimmering to that twilight — friend-
ship!

Grant that she never loved this Bragelone;
Still, tears and sighs make up dull interludes
In passion's short-lived drama! She is good,
Gentle, and meek, — and I do think she loves me,

(A truth no king is sure of!) — But, in fine,
I have begun to feel the hours are long
Pass'd in her presence! what I hotly sought,
Coldly I weary of. I'll seek De Lauzun:
I like his wit — I almost like his knavery;
It never makes us yawn, like high-flown virtues.
Thirst, hunger, rest — these are the wants of peasants.
A courtier's wants are titles, place, and gold;
But a poor king, who has these wants so sated,
Has only one want left — to be amused!

[*Exit LOUIS.*

SCENE III.

Re-enter the DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Duch. de la Vall. Louis! dear Louis! — Gone!
alas! and left me
Half in displeasure! — I was wrong, methinks,
To — no! — I was not wrong to *feel* remorse,
But wrong to give it utterance!

Enter MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Mme. de Mon. What! alone,
Fair friend? I thought the king —
Duch. de la Vall. Has gone, in anger;
Cold, and in anger.
Mme. de Mon. What, with *thee*, dear lady?
On the smooth surface of that angel meekness

I should have thought no angry breath could linger.
But men and kings are —

Duch. de la Vall. Hush! I was to blame.
The king's all goodness. Shall I write to him?
Letters have not our looks — and, oh, one look!
How many hardest hearts one look hath won,
A life consumed in words had woo'd in vain!

Mme. de Mon. To-night there is high revel at the
court;

There you may meet your truant king.

Duch. de la Vall. To-night!
An age! — How many hours to night?

Mme. de Mon. You know
My office makes my home the royal palace;
I serve the queen, and thus shall see your Louis
Ere the sun set.

Duch. de la Vall. You! — happy you!

Mme. de Mon. Perchance
(The king is ever gracious to your friends,
And knows me of the nearest), I might whisper,
Though with less sweet a tone, your message to him,
And be your dove, and bear you back the olive?

Duch. de la Vall. My kind Athenè!

Mme. de Mon. Nay, 'tis yours the kindness,
To wear my love so near your heart. But, tell me,
Since you accept my heraldry, the cause
Of strife between you in this court of love.

Duch. de la Vall. Alas! I know not, save that I
offended!

The wherefore boots the heart that loves to know?

Mme. de Mon. Not much, I own, the poor defendant
— woman,
But much the advocate; I need the brief.

Duch. de la Vall. Methinks his kingly nature chafes
to see

It cannot rule the conscience as the heart;
But, tell him, ever henceforth I will keep
Sad thoughts for lonely hours. — Athenè, tell him,
That if he smile once more upon Louise,
The smile shall never pass from that it shines on;
Say — but I'll write myself.

[*Sits down to the table and writes.*

Mme. de Mon. [aside]. What need of schemes —
Lauzun's keen wit — Athenè's plotting spirit?
She weaves herself the web that shall ensnare her!

Duch. de la Vall. There; back these feeble words
with all thy beauty,
Thy conquering eyes, and thy bewitching smile.
Sure never suit can fail with such a pleader!
And now a little while to holier sadness,
And thine accusing memory, Bragelone!

Mme. de Mon. Whom speak you of? — the hero of
the Fronde?
Who seem'd the last of the old Norman race,
And half preserved to this degenerate age
The lordly shape the ancient Bayards wore!

Duch. de la Vall. You praise him well! He was
my father's friend,
And should have been his son. We were affianced,

And — but no more! Ah! cruel, cruel Louis!
You mourn'd for him — how much more cause have *I!*
Mme. de Mon. [quickly]. What! he is dead? your
grief the king resented?

Knew he your troth had thus been plighted?

Duch. de la Vall. Yes:
And still he seem'd to deem it sin to mourn him!

Mme. de Mon. [aside]. A clue — another clue — that
I will follow,
Until it lead me to the throne! — [Aloud.] Well, cheer
thee;

Trust your true friend; rely on my persuasion.
Methinks I never task'd its powers till now.
Farewell, and fear not! Oh! I'll plead your cause,
As if myself the client! — [Aside.] Thou art sentenced!

[*Exit MADAME DE MONTESPAN.*

Duch. de la Vall. 'Tis a sweet solace still to have
a friend —

A friend in *woman!* Oh, to what a reed
We bind our destinies, when man we love!
Peace, honour, conscience lost — if I lose him,
What have I left? How sinks my heart within me!
I'll to my chamber; there the day of tears
Lends night its smile! *And I'm the thing they envy!*

[*Exit DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.*

SCENE IV.

The Gardens of Versailles — LAUZUN, GRAMMONT, and Courtiers.

Lau. 'Tis now the hour in which our royal master
Honours the ground of his rejoicing gardens
By his illustrious footsteps! — there, my lords,
That is the true style-courtier!

Gram. Out upon you!
Your phrase would suit some little German prince,
Of fifteen hundred quarterings and five acres,
And not the world's great Louis! 'Tis the hour
When Phœbus shrinks abash'd, and all the stars
Envy the day that it beholds the king!

Enter LOUIS.

Louis. My lords,
Pray you be cover'd. Hark ye, dear De Lauzun.
[*Exeunt the Courtiers, as the King takes LAUZUN aside.*]
The fair De Montespan?

Lau. Is worth the loving;
And, by mine honour, while we speak she comes!
A happy fortune. Sire, may I withdraw? [*Exit.*]

Enter MADAME DE MONTESPAN. [*Salutes the King and passes on.*]

Louis. Fair madam, we had hoped you with you
brought

Some bright excuse to grace our cheerless presence
With a less short-lived light! You dawn upon us
Only to make us more regret your setting.

Mme. de Mon. Sire, if I dared, I would most gladly
hail

A few short moments to arrest your presence,
And rid me of a soft, yet painful duty.

Louis. 'Tis the first time, be sure, so sweet a voice
E'er craved a sanction for delighting silence.

Mme. de Mon. Gracious sire, the duchess,
Whom you have lately left, she fears, in anger,
Besought me to present this letter to you.

Louis [takes the letter, and aside]. She blushes while
she speaks! — 'Tis passing strange,
I ne'er remark'd those darkly-dreaming eyes,
That melt in their own light!

[Reads, and carelessly puts up the letter.

It scarcely suits
Her dignity, and ours, to choose a witness
To what hath chanced between us. She is good,
But her youth, spent in some old country castle,
Knows not the delicate spirit of a court.

Mme. de Mon. She bade me back her suit. Alas!
my liege,
Who can succeed, if fair La Vallière fail?

Louis. She bade thee? — she was prudent! Were
I woman,
And loved, I'd not have chosen such a herald.

Mme. de Mon. Love varies in its colours with all
tempers;

The duchess is too proud to fear a rival,
Too beautiful to find one. May I take
Some word of comfort back to cheer her sadness,
Made doubly deep by thoughts of your displeasure,
And grief for a dear friend?

Louis.

Ay, that's the sadness!

Mme. de Mon. He was a gallant lord, this Bragelone,
And her betrothed. Perchance in youth she loved him,
Ere the great sun had quench'd the morning star!

Louis. She loved him! — think'st thou so?

Mme. de Mon. Indeed I know not;
But I have heard her eloquent in praise,
And seen her lost in woe. You will forgive her!

Louis. Forgive her? — there's no cause!

Mme. de Mon. Now, bless you, sire,
For that one word. My task is done.

Louis.

Already?

Mme. de Mon. What can I more? Oh, let me
hasten back!

What rapture must be hers who can but fill
An atom of the heart of godlike Louis!
How much more the whole soul! — To lose thy love
Must be, not grief, but some sublime despair,
Like that the Roman felt who lost a world!

Louis [aside]. By heaven, she fires me! — a brave,
royal spirit,
Worthy to love a king!

Mme. de Mon. To know thee hers,
What pride! — what glory! Though all earth cried
“Shame!”

Earth could not still the trumpet at her heart,
 That, with its swelling and exultant voice,
 Told her the earth was but the slave of Louis,
 And *she* the partner! And, O hour of dread!
 When (for the hour must come) some fairer form
 Shall win thee from her — still, methinks, 'twould be
 A boast to far posterity to point
 To all the trophies piled about thy throne,
 And say — “He loved me once!” — O sire, your
 pardon;
 I am too bold.

Louis. Why, this were love, indeed,
 Could we but hope to win it. And such love
 Would weave the laurel in its wreaths of myrtle.
 Beautiful lady! while thou speak'st, I dream
 What love should be, — and feel where love is not!
 Thou com'st the suitor, to remain the judge;
 And I could kneel to thee for hope and mercy.

Mme de Mon. Ah, no! — ah, no! — she is my
 friend. And if
 She love not as I love — I mean, I *might* love —
 Still she *believes* she loves thee. Tempt me not.
 Who could resist thee! Sire, farewell!

[*Exit MADAME DE MONTESPAN.*

Louis. Her voice
 Is hush'd; but still its queen-like music lingers
 In my rapt ears. I dreamt Louise had loved me;
 She who felt love disgrace! Before the true,
 How the tame counterfeit grows pale and lifeless.

By the sad brow of yon devout La Vallière
I feel a man, and fear myself a culprit!
But this high spirit wakes in mine the sense
Of what it is — I *am* that Louis whom
The world has called “The Great!” — and in he
pride

Mirror mine own. This jaded life assumes
The zest, the youth, the glory of *excitement!*
To-night we meet again; — speed fast, dull hours!

[*Exit LOUIS*

SCENE V.

*Grand Saloon in the Palace of Versailles — in the back-
ground the suite of apartments is seen in perspective — Courtiers
Ladies, &c.*

First Cour. [approaching the Duch. de la Vall.]

Madam, your goodness is to France a proverb;
If I might dare request, this slight memorial
You would convey to our most gracious master?
The rank of colonel in the royal guard
Is just now vacant. True, I have not served;
But I do trust my valour is well-known:
I've kill'd three noted swordsmen in a duel! —
And, for the rest, a word from you were more
Than all the laurels Holland gave to others.

Duch. de la Vall. My lord, forgive me! I might ill
deserve
The friendship of a monarch, if, forgetting

That honours are the attributes of merit; —
And they who sell the service of the public
For the false coin, soft smiles and honey'd words
Forged in the antechambers of a palace,
Defraud a people to degrade a king!
If you have merits, let *them* plead for you;
Nor ask in whispers what you claim from justice.

Mme. de Mon. [to first Courtier, as the *Duch. de la Vall.* turns away]. Give me the paper. Hush! the king shall see it!

[*Music.*

Enter the KING, GRAMMONT, and other Courtiers. He pauses by the QUEEN, and accosts her respectfully in dumb show.

Gram. [aside]. With what a stately and sublime decorum
His majesty throws grandeur o'er his foibles!
He not disguises vice; but makes vice kingly —
Most gorgeous of all sensualists!

Lau. How different
His royal rival in the chase of pleasure,
The spendthrift, sauntering Second Charles of England!

Gram. Ay, Jove to Comus!

Lau. Silence! Jove approaches!

[*The crowd breaks up into groups; the King passes slowly from each till he joins the Duchess de la Vallière; the Courtiers retire.*

Louis. Why, this is well. I thank you.

Duch. de la Vall. And forgive me?

Louis. Forgive you! You mistake me: wounded
feeling

Is not displeasure. Let this pass, Louise.

Your lovely friend has a most heavenly smile!

Duch. de la Vall. And a warm heart. In truth, my
liege, I'm glad

You see her with my eyes.

Louis. You have no friend
Whose face it glads me more to look upon.

[*Aside, and gazing on MONTESPAN.*

(What thrilling eyes!) — [Aloud.] My thanks are due
to her,

For, with the oil of her mellifluous voice,
Smoothing the waves the passing breeze had ruffled.

[*Joins MADAME DE MONTESPAN, and leads her through
the crowd to the back of the stage.*

Lau. Your grace resolves no more to be content
Eclipsing others. You eclipse yourself.

Duch. de la Vall. I thought you were a friend, and
not a flatterer.

Lau. Friendship would lose its dearest privilege
If friendship were forbidden to admire!
Why, ev'n the king admires your grace's friend, —
Told me to-day she was the loveliest lady
The court could boast. Nay, see how, while they speak,
He gazes on her. How his breathing fans
The locks that shade the roses of her cheek!

Duch. de la Vall. Ha! Nay, be still, my heart.

Lau. It is but friendship;
But it looks wondrous warm!

Duch. de la Vall. He cannot mean it!
And yet — and yet — he lingers on her hand —
He whispers!

Lau. How the gossips gaze and smile!
There'll be much scandal.

Duch. de la Vall. Lauzun! — what! — thou think'st
not —
No, no, thou canst not think —

Lau. That courts know treachery,
That women are ambitious, or men false;
I will not think it. Pshaw!

Duch. de la Vall. My brain swims round!
Louis, of late, hath been so changed. How fair
She looks to-night! — and, oh, *she* has not fallen!
He comes — he nears us — he has left her. Fie!
My foolish fancies wronged him!

Lau. The spell works.

Mme. de Mon. [as the king quits her, to *First Courtier*,
giving him back the paper]. My lord, your
suit is granted.

First Cour. Blessings, madam!

[*The other Courtiers come round him.*

Second Cour. Her influence must be great. I know
three dukes
Most pressing for the post.

Third Cour. A rising sun,
Worthier of worship than that cold La Vallière.

The king as well, methinks, might have no mistress,
As one by whom no courtier grew the richer.

[*The Courtiers group round MADAME DE MONTESPAÑ.*

Louis. My lords, you do remember the bright lists
Which, in the place termed thenceforth "*The Carrousel*,"*
We sometime held? — a knightly tournament,
That brought us back the age of the first Francis!

Lau. Of all your glorious festivals, the greatest!
Who but remembers?

Duch. de la Vall. [Aside]. Then he wore my colours.
How kind to bring back to my yearning heart
That golden spring-time of our early loves!

Louis. Next week we will revive the heroic pageant.
Proud plumes shall wave, and levell'd spears be shiver'd;
Ourself will take the lists, and do defy
The chivalry of our renownèd France,
In honour of that lady of our court
For whom we wear the colours, and the motto
Which suits her best — "*Most bright where all are
brilliant!*"

Gram. Oh, a most kingly notion!

Louis. Ere we part,
Let each knight choose his colours and his lady.
Ourself have set the example.

[*The Courtiers mingle with the Ladies, &c., many
Ladies give their colours.*

* The *Place du Carrousel* was so named from a splendid festival given by Louis. On the second day, devoted to knightly games, the king, who appeared in the character of Roger, carried off four prizes. All the crown jewels were prodigalized on his arms and the trappings of his horse.

Duch. de la Vall. [timidly.] Oh, my Louis! I read thy heart; thou hast chosen this device To learn thy poor la Vallière to be proud. Nay, turn not from my blessings. Once before You wore my colours, though I gave them not. To-night I give them! — Louis loves me still!

[*Takes one of the knots from her breast, and presents it.*

Louis. Lady, the noblest hearts in France would beat

More high beneath your badge. Alas! my service Is vow'd already here.

[*Turning to MADAME DE MONTESPAN, and placing a knot of her colours over his order of the Saint Esprit.*

These are my colours!

Duch. de la Vall. How! How!

[*The King converses apart with MADAME DE MONTESPAN.*

Lau. [to the *Duch. de la Vall.*] Be calm, your grace; a thousand eyes

Are on you. Give the envious crowd no triumph.

Ah! had my fortune won so soft a heart

I would have —

Duch. de la Vall. Peace! — Away! Betray'd! — Undone!

ACT IV. — SCENE I.

The Gardens at Versailles.

Enter LAUZUN.

Lau. So far, so prosperous! From the breast of
Louis,

The blooming love it bore so long a summer
Falls like a fruit o'er-ripe; and, in the court,
And o'er the king, this glittering Montespan
Queens it without a rival, — awes all foes,
And therefore makes all friends. State, office, honours,
Reflect her smile, or fade before her frown.

So far, so well! Enough for Montespan.

For Lauzun now! — I love this fair La Vallière,
As well, at least, as woman's worth the loving;
And if the jewel has one trifling flaw,
The gold 'tis set in will redeem the blemish.
The king's no niggard lover; and her wealth
Is vast. I have the total in my tablets —
(Besides estates in Picardy and Provence.)
I'm very poor — my debtors very pressing.
I've robb'd the duchess of a faithless lover,
To give myself a wife, and her a husband.
Wedlock's a holy thing, — and wealth a good one!

Enter LOUIS.

Louis. The day is long — I have not seen Athenè.
Pleasure is never stagnant in her presence;
But every breeze of woman's changeful skies
Ripples the stream, and freshens e'en the sunshine.

Lau. "Tis said, your Majesty, "that contrast's sweet,"
And she you speak of well contrasts another,
Whom once —

Louis. I loved; and still devoutly honour.
This poor La Vallière! — could we will affection,
I would have never changed. And even now
I feel Athenè has but charm'd my senses,
And my void heart still murmurs for Louise!
I would we could be friends, since now not lovers,
Nor dare be happy while I know her wretched.

Lau. Wearies she still your Majesty with prayers,
Tender laments, and passionate reproaches?

Louis. Her love outlives its hopes.

Lau. An irksome task
To witness tears we cannot kiss away,
And with cold friendship freeze the tears of love!

Louis. Most irksome and most bootless!

Lau. Haply, sire,
In one so pure, the charm of wedded life
Might lull keen griefs to rest, and curb the love
Thou fiest from to the friendship that thou seekest?

Louis. I've thought of this. The Duke de Longueville loves her,

And hath besought before her feet to lay
His princely fortunes.

Lau. [quickly]. Ha! — and she —

Louis. Rejects him.

Lau. Sire, if love's sun, once set, bequeathes a
twilight,
'Twould only hover o'er some form whom chance
Had link'd with Louis — some one (though unworthy)
Whose presence took a charm from brighter thoughts
That knit it with the past.

Louis. Why, how now, duke! —
Thou speak'st not of thyself?

Lau. I dare not, sire!

Louis. Ha, ha! — poor Lauzun! — what! the soft
La Vallière

Transfer her sorrowing heart to thee! Ha, ha!

Lau. My name is not less noble than De Longue-
ville's;
My glory greater, since the world has said
Louis esteems me more.

Louis. Esteems! No; — favours!
And thou dost think that she, who shrunk from love,
Lest love were vice, would wed the wildest lord
That ever laugh'd at virtue?

Lau. Sire, you wrong me,
Or else you (pardon me) condemn yourself.
Is it too much for one the king calls friend
To aspire to one the king has call'd —

Louis. Sir, hold!
I never so malign'd that hapless lady

As to give *her* the title only due
To such as Montespan, who glories in it —
The *last* my *mistress*; but the *first* my *victim*:
A nice distinction, taught not in your logic,
Which, but just now, confused esteem and favour.
Go to! we kings are not the dupes you deem us.

Lau. [aside]. So high! I'll win La Vallière to
avenge me,

And humble this imperial vanity.

[Aloud.] Sire, I offend! Permit me to retire,
And mourn your anger; nor presume to guess
Whence came the cause. And, since it seems your
favour

Made me aspire too high, in that I loved
Where you, sire, made love noble, and half-dream'd
Might be — nay, *am not* — wholly there disdain'd —

Louis. How, duke?

Lau. I do renounce at once
The haughty vision. Sire, permit my absence.

Louis. Lauzun, thou hintest that, were suit allow'd
thee,

La Vallière might not scorn it; — is it so?

Lau. I crave your pardon, sire.

Louis. Must I ask twice?

Lau. I do believe, then, sire, with time and
patience,

The duchess might be won to — *not reject me!*

Louis. Go, then, and prove thy fortune. We permit
thee.

And, if thou prosperest, why then love's a riddle,

And woman is — no matter! Go, my lord!
We did not mean to wound thee. So, forget it!
Woo when thou wilt — and wear what thou canst win.

Lau. My gracious liege, Lauzun commends him to thee;
And if one word, he merit not, may wound him,
He'll think of favours words can never cancel.
Memory shall med'cine to his present pain.
God save you, sire! — [Aside] to be the dupe I deem
you! [Exit LAUZUN.]

Louis. I love her not; and yet, methinks, am
jealous!

Lauzun is wise and witty — knows the sex;
What if she do? — No! I will not believe it.
And what is she to me? — a friend — a friend!
And I would have her wed. 'Twere best for both —
A balm for conscience — an excuse for change!
'Twere best: — I marvel much if she'll accept him!

[Exit LOUIS.]

SCENE II.

A Private Apartment in the Palace of the DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Enter the DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Duch. de la Vall. He loves me, then, no longer!
All the words
Earth knows shape but one thought — "He loves no
longer!"

Where shall I turn? My mother — my poor mother!
Sleeps the long sleep! 'Tis better so! Her life
Ran to its lees. I will not mourn for her.
But it is hard to be alone on earth!
This love, for which I gave so much, is dead,
Save in my heart; and love, surviving love,
Changes its nature, and becomes despair!
Ah, me! — ah, me! how hateful is this world!

Enter Gentleman of the Chamber.

Gent. The Duke de Lauzun!

Duch. de la Vall. News, sweet news, of Louis!

Enter LAUZUN.

Lau. Dare I disturb your thoughts?

Duch. de la Vall. My lord, you're welcome!
Came you from court to-day?

Lau. I left the king
But just now, in the gardens.

Duch. de la Vall. [eagerly]. Well!
Lau. He bore him

With his accustom'd health.

Duch. de la Vall. Proceed.

Lau. Dear lady,
I have no more to tell.

Duch de la Vall. [aside]. Alas! No message!

Lau. We did converse, 'tis true, upon a subject
Most dear to one of us. Your grace divines it?

Duch. de la Vall. [joyfully]. Was it of me he spoke?

Lau. Of you
I spoke, and *he* replied. I praised your beauty —
Duch. de la Vall. You praised!

Lau. Your form, your face — that wealth of mind
Which, play'd you not the miser, and conceal'd it,
Would buy up all the coins that pass for wit.
The king, assenting, wish'd he might behold you
As happy — as your virtues should have made you.

Duch. de la Vall. 'Twas said in mockery!

Lau. Lady, no! — in kindness.
Nay, more (he added), would you yet your will
Mould to his wish —

Duch. de la Vall. His wish! — the lightest!

Lau. Ah!
You know not how my heart throbs while you speak!
Be not so rash to promise; or, at least,
Be faithful to perform!

Duch. de la Vall. You speak in riddles.

Lau. Of your lone state and beautiful affections,
Form'd to make Home an Eden, our good king,
Tenderly mindful, fain would see you link
Your lot to one whose love might be your shelter.
He spake, and all my long-conceal'd emotions
Gush'd into words, and I confess'd — O lady,
Hear me confess once more — how well I love thee!

Duch de la Vall. You dared? — and *he* — the
king —

Lau. Upon me smiled,
And bade me prosper.

Duch. de la Vall. Ah!

[*Sinks down, and covers her face with her hands.*

Lau. Nay, nay, look up!

The heart that could forsake a love like thine
Doth not deserve regret. Look up, dear lady!

Duch. de la Vall. He bade thee prosper!

Lau. Pardon! My wild hope
Outran discretion.

Duch. de la Vall. Louis bade thee prosper!

Lau. Ah, if this thankless — this remorseless love
Thou couldst forget! Oh, give me but thy friendship,
And take respect, faith, worship, all, in Lauzun!

Duch. de la Vall. Consign me to another! Well, 'tis
well!

Earth's latest tie is broke! — earth's hopes are over!

Lau. Speak to me, sweet Louise!

Duch. de la Vall. So, thou art he
To whom this shatter'd heart should be surrender'd? —
And thou, the high-born, glittering, scornful Lauzun,
Wouldst take the cast-off leman of a king,
Nor think thyself disgraced! Fie! — fie! thou'rt shame-
less!

Lau. You were betray'd by love, and not by sin,
Nor low ambition. Your disgrace is honour
By the false side of dames the world calls spotless.

Duch. de la Vall. Go, sir, nor make me scorn you.

If I've err'd,
I know, at least, the majesty of virtue,
And feel — what you forgot.

Lau.

Yet hear me, madam!

Duch. de la Vall. Go, go! You are the king's friend
— you were mine;

I would not have you thus debased — refused
By one at once the fallen and forsaken!
His friend shall not be shamed so!

[*Exit the DUCH. DE LA VALLIÈRE.*

Lau. [*passing his hand over his eyes.*] I do swear
These eyes are moist! And he who own'd this gem
Casts it away, and cries "divine" to tinsel!
So falls my hope. My fortunes call me back
To surer schemes. Before that ray of goodness
How many plots shrunk, blinded, into shadow!
Lauzun forgot himself, and dreamt of virtue!

[*Exit LAUZUN.*

SCENE III.

Gentleman of the Chamber, and BRAGELONE, *as a Franciscan friar.*

Gent. The duchess gone! I fear me that, to-day
You are too late for audience, reverend father.

Brage. Audience! — a royal phrase! — it suits the
duchess.

Go, son; announce me.

Gent. By what name, my father?

Brage. I've done with names. Announce a nameless monk,
Whose prayers have risen o'er some graves she honours.

Gent. [aside]. My lady is too lavish of her bounty
To these proud shavelings: yet: methinks, this friar
Hath less of priest than warrior in his bearing.
He awes me with his stern and thrilling voice,
His stately gesture, and imperious eye.
And yet, I swear, he comes for alms! — the varlet!
Why should I heed him?

Brage. Didst thou hear? Begone!

[*Exit Gentleman.*

Yes, she will know me not. My lealest soldier,
One who had march'd, bare-breasted, on the steel,
If I had bid him cast away the treasure
Of the o'er-valued life; the nurse that rear'd me,
Or mine own mother, in these shroudlike robes,
And in the immature and rapid age
Which, from my numb'd and withering heart, hath
crept

Unto my features, now might gaze upon me,
And pass the stranger by. Why should she know me,
If they who loved me know not? Hark! I hear her:
That silver footfall! — still it hath to me
Its own peculiar and most spiritual music,
Trembling along the pulses of the air,
And dying on the heart that makes its echo!
'Tis she! How lovely yet!

Enter the DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Duch. de la Vall. Your blessing, father.

Brage. Let courts and courtiers bless the favour'd
duchess!

Courts bless the proud; Heaven's ministers, the humble.

Duch. de la Vall. He taunts me, this poor friar!

Well, my father,

I have obey'd your summons. Do you seek

Masses for souls departed? — or the debt

The wealthy owe the poor? — say on!

Brage. [aside]. Her heart
Is not yet harden'd! Daughter, such a mission
Were sweeter than the task which urged me hither:
You had a lover once — a plain, bold soldier;
He loved you well!

Duch. de la Vall. Ah, Heaven!

Brage. And you forsook him.

Your choice was natural — some might call it noble!
And this blunt soldier pardon'd the *desertion*,
But sunk at what his folly term'd *dishonour*.

Duch. de la Vall. O father, spare me! — if dishonour
were,

It rested but with me.

Brage. So deem'd the world,
But not that foolish soldier! — he had learn'd
To blend his thoughts, his fame, *himself*, with thee;
Thou wert a purer, a diviner self;
He loved thee as a warrior worships glory;
He loved thee as a Roman honour'd virtue;

He loved thee as thy sex adore ambition,
 And when Pollution breathed upon his idol,
 It blasted glory, virtue, and ambition,
 Fill'd up each crevice in the world of thought,
 And poison'd earth with thy contagious shame!

Duch. de la Vall. Spare me! in mercy, spare me!

Brage. This poor fool,
 This shadow, living only on thy light,
 When thou wert darken'd, could but choose to die.
 He left the wars; no fame, since *thine* was dim:
 He left his land; — what home without Louise?
 It broke — that stubborn, stern, unbending heart —
 It broke! and, breaking, its last sigh — forgave thee!

Duch. de la Vall. And I live on!

Brage. One eve, methinks, he told me,
 Thy hand around his hauberk wound a scarf;
 And thy voice bade him “Wear it for the sake
 Of one who honour'd worth!” Were those the words?

Duch. de la Vall. They were. Alas! alas!

Brage. He wore it, lady,
 Till memory ceased. It was to him the token
 Of a sweet dream; and, from his quiet grave,
 He sends it now to thee. — Its hues are faded.

Duch. de la Vall. Give it me! — let me bathe it
 with my tears!

Memorial of my guilt —

Brage. [in a soft and tender accent]. And his forgive-
 ness!

Duch. de la Vall. That tone! ha! while thou speakest,
 in thy voice,

And in thy presence, there is something kindred
To him we jointly mourn: thou art —

Brage. His brother:
Of whom, perchance, in ancient years he told thee;
Who, early wearied of this garish world,
Fled to the convent-shade, and found repose.

Duch. de la Vall. [approaching]. Ay, is it so? —
thou'rt Bragelone's brother?

Why, then, thou art what *he* would be, if living —
A friend to one most friendless!

Brage. Friendless — Ay,
Thou hast learnt, betimes, the truth, that man's wild
passion
Makes but its sport of virtue, peace, affection;
And breaks the plaything when the game is done!
Friendless! — I pity thee!

Duch. de la Vall. Oh! holy father,
Stay with me! — succour me! — reprove, but guide me:
Teach me to wean my thoughts from earth to heaven,
And be what God ordain'd his chosen priests —
Foes to our sin, but friends to our despair.

Brage. Daughter, a heavenly and a welcome duty,
But one most rigid and austere: there is
No composition with our debts of sin.
God claims thy soul; and, lo! his creature there!
Thy choice must be between them — God or man,
Virtue or guilt; a Louis or —

Duch. de la Vall. A Louis!
Not mine the poor atonement of the choice;
I am, myself, the Abandon'd One!

Brage. I know it;

Therefore my mission and my ministry.

When he who loved thee died, he bade me wait
The season when the sicklied blight of change
Creeps o'er the bloom of Passion, when the way
Is half prepared by Sorrow to Repentance,
And seek you then, — *he* trusted not in vain:
Perchance an idle hope, but it consoled him.

Duch. de la Vall. No, no! — not idle! — in my
happiest hours,

When the world smiled, a void was in this heart
The world could never fill: thy brother knew me!

Brage. I do believe thee, daughter. Hear me yet;
My mission is not ended. When thy mother
Lay on the bed of death (she went before
The sterner heart the same blow broke more slowly),—
As thus she lay, around the swimming walls
Her dim eyes wander'd, searching through the shadows,
As if the spirit, half-redeem'd from clay,
Could force its will to shape, and, from the darkness,
Body a daughter's image — (nay, be still!)
Thou wert not there; — alas! thy shame had murder'd
Even the blessed sadness of that duty!
But o'er that pillow watch'd a sleepless eye,
And by that couch moved one untiring step,
And o'er that suffering rose a ceaseless prayer;
And still thy mother's voice, whene'er it call'd
Upon a daughter — found a son!

Duch. de la Vall. O Heaven!
Have mercy on me!

Brage. Coldly through the lattice
Gleam'd the slow dawn, and, from their latest sleep,
Woke the sad eyes it was not *thine* to close!
And, as they fell upon the haggard brow,
And the thin hairs — grown grey, but not by Time—
Of that lone watcher — while upon her heart
Gush'd all the memories of the mighty wrecks
Thy guilt had made of what were once the shrines
For Honour, Peace, and God! — that aged woman
(She was a hero's wife) upraised her voice
To curse her child!

Duch. de la Vall. Go on! — be kind, and kill me!

Brage. Then he, whom thoughts of what he ~~would~~
to thee

Had made her son, arrested on her lips
The awful doom, and, from the earlier past,
Invoked a tenderer spell — a holier image!
Painted thy gentle, soft, obedient childhood —
Thy guileless youth, lone state, and strong temptation;
Thy very sin the overflow of thoughts
From wells whose source was innocence; and thus
Sought, with the sunshine of thy maiden spring,
To melt the ice that lay upon her heart,
Till all the mother flow'd again!

Duch. de la Vall And she!

Brage. Spoke only once again! She died — and
bless'd thee!

Duch. de la Vall. [rushing out]. No more! — I ~~can~~
no more! — my heart is breaking!

Brage. The angel hath not left her! — if the plumes
Have lost the whiteness of their younger glory,
The wings have still the instinct of the skies,
And yet shall bear her up!

Louis [without]. We need you not, sir:
Ourselves will seek the duchess.

Brage. The king's voice!
How my flesh creeps! — my foe, and her destroyer!
The ruthless, heartless —

[*His hand seeks rapidly and mechanically for his sword-hilt.*

Why, why! — where's my sword?
O Lord! I do forget myself to dotage:
The soldier, now, is a poor helpless monk,
That hath not even curses. Satan, hence!
Get thee behind me, Tempter! — There, I'm calm.

SCENE IV.

LOUIS and BRAGELONE.

Louis. I can no more hold parley with impatience,
But long to learn how Lauzun's courtship prospers.
She is not here. At prayers, perhaps. The duchess
Hath grown devout. A friar! — Save you, father!

Brage. I thank thee, son.

Louis. He knows me not. Well,
monk,
Are you her grace's almoner?

Brage.

Sire, no!

Louis. So short, yet know us?*Brage.*

Sire, I do. You are

The man —

Louis. How, priest! — the *man*!*Brage.*

The word offends you?

The king, who raised a maiden to a duchess.

That maiden's father was a gallant subject:

Kingly reward! — you made his daughter duchess.

That maiden's mother was a stainless matron:

Her heart you broke, though mother to a duchess!

That maiden was affianced from her youth

To one who served you well — nay, saved your life:

His life you robb'd of all that gave life value;

And yet — you made his fair betroth'd a duchess!

You are that king. The world proclaims you "Great;"

A million warriors bled to buy your laurels;

A million peasants starved to build Versailles:

Your people famish; but your court is splendid!

Priests from the pulpit bless your glorious reign;

Poets have sung you greater than Augustus;

And painters placed you on immortal canvass,

Limn'd as the Jove whose thunders awe the world:

But to the humble minister of Heaven,

You are the king who has betray'd his trust —

Beggar'd a nation but to bloat a court,

Seen in men's lives the pastime to ambition,

Look'd but on virtue as the toy for vice;

And, for the first time, from a subject's lips,

Now learns the name he leaves to Time and God!

Louis. Add to the bead-roll of that king's offences,
That when a foul-mouth'd monk assumed the rebel,
The monster-king forgave him. Hast thou done?

Brage. Your changing hues belie your royal mien;
Ill the high monarch veils the trembling man!

Louis. Well, you are privileged! It ne'er was said
The Fourteenth Louis, in his proudest hour,
Bow'd not his sceptre to the Church's crozier.

Brage. Alas! *the Church!* 'Tis true, this garb of
serge
Dares speech that daunts the ermine, and walks free
Where stout hearts tremble in the triple mail.
But wherefore? — Lies the virtue in the robe,
Which the moth eats? or in these senseless beads?
Or in the name of Priest? The Pharisees
Had priests that gave their Saviour to the cross!
No! we have high immunity and sanction,
That Truth may teach humanity to Power,
Glide through the dungeon, pierce the armed throng,
Awaken Luxury on her Sybarite couch,
And, startling souls that slumber on a throne,
Bow kings before that priest of priests — THE CON-
SCIENCE!

Louis [aside]. An awful man! — unlike the reverend
crew

Who praise my royal virtues in the pulpit,
And — ask for bishoprics when church is over!

Brage. This makes us sacred. The profane are
they
Honouring the herald while they scorn the mission.

The king who serves the Church, yet clings to Mammon;
Who fears the pastor, but forgets the flock;
Who bows before the monitor, and yet
Will ne'er forego the sin, may sink, when age
Palsies the lust and deadens the temptation,
To the priest-ridden, not repentant, dotard, —
For pious hopes hail superstitious terrors,
And seek some sleek Iscariot of the *Church*,
To sell salvation for the thirty pieces!

Louis [aside]. He speaks as one inspired!

Brage. Awake! — awake!

Great though thou art, awake thee from the dream
That earth was made for kings — mankind for
slaughter —

Woman for lust — the people for the palace!
Dark warnings have gone forth; along the air
Lingers the crash of the first Charles's throne!
Behold the young, the fair, the haughty king!
The kneeling courtiers, and the flattering priests;
Lo! where the palace rose, behold the scaffold —
The crowd — the axe — the headsman — and the
victim!

Lord of the silver lilies, canst thou tell
If the same fate await not thy descendant!
If some meek son of thine imperial line
May make no brother to yon headless spectre!
And when the sage who saddens o'er the end
Tracks back the causes, tremble, lest he find
The seeds, thy wars, thy pomp, and thy profusion
Sow'd in a heartless court and breadless people,

Grew to the tree from which men shaped the scaffold, —
And the long glare of thy funereal glories
Light unborn monarchs to a ghastly grave!
Beware, proud King! the Present cries aloud,
A prophet to the future! Wake! — beware!

[*Exit BRAGELONE.*

Louis. Gone! Most ill-omen'd voice and fearful
shape!

Scarce seem'd it of the earth; a thing that breathed
But to fulfil some dark and dire behest;
To appal us, and to vanish. — The quick blood
Halts in my veins. Oh! never till this hour
Heard I the voice that awed the soul of Louis,
Or met one brow that did not quail before
My kingly gaze! And this unmitred monk!
I'm glad that none were by. — It was a dream;
So let its memory like a dream depart.
I am no tyrant — nay, I love my people.
My wars were made but for the fame of France!
My pomp! why, tush! — what king can play the
hermit?
My conscience smites me not; and but last eve
I did confess, and was absolved! — A bigot;
And half, methinks, a heretic! I wish
The Jesuits had the probing of his doctrines.
Well, well, 'tis o'er! — What ho, there!

Enter Gentleman of the Chamber.

Louis.

Wine! Apprise

Once more the duchess of our presence. — Stay!
Yon monk, what doth he here?

Gent. I know not, sire,
Nor saw him till this day.

Louis. Strange! — Wine!
[*Exit Gentleman*]

SCENE V.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE and LOUIS.

Louis. Well, madam,
We've tarried long your coming, and meanwhile
Have found your proxy in a madman monk,
Whom, for the future, we would pray you spare us.

Re-enter Gentleman with wine.
So, so! the draught restores us. Fair La Vallière,
Make not yon holy man your confessor;
You'll find small comfort in his lectures.

Duch. de la Vall. Sire,
His meaning is more kindly than his manner.
I pray you, pardon him.

Louis. Ay, ay! No more;
Let's think of him no more. You had, this morn,
A courtlier visitant, methinks — De Lauzun?

Duch. de la Vall. Yes, sire.
Louis. A smooth and gallant gentleman.
You're silent. Silence is assent; 'tis well!

Duch. de la Vall. [aside.] Down, my full heart!
The duke declares your wish
Is that — that I should bind this broken heart
And — no! I cannot speak —

[With great and sudden energy.]

You wish me wed, sire?

Louis. "Twere best that you should wed; and yet,
De Lauzun

Is scarce the happiest choice. — But as thou wilt.

Duch. de la Vall. "Twere best that I should wed!"
— thou saidst it, Louis;
Say it once more!

Louis. In honesty, I think so.

Duch. de la Vall. My choice is made, then — I
obey the fiat,
And will become a bride!

Louis. The duke has sped!
I trust he loves thyself, and not thy dower.

Duch. de la Vall. The duke! what, hast thou read
so ill this soul
That thou couldst deem thus meanly of that book
Whose every page was bared to thee? A bitter
Lot has been mine — and this sums up the measure.
Go, Louis! go! — All glorious as thou art —
Earth's Agamemnon — the great king of men —
Thou wert not worthy of this woman's heart!

Louis. Her passion moves me! — Then your choice
has fallen
Upon a nobler bridegroom?

Duch. de la Vall. Sire, it hath!

Louis. May I demand that choice.

Duch. de la Vall. Too soon thou'l learn it.

Not yet! Ah me!

Louis. Nay, sigh not, my sweet duchess. Speak not so sadly. What though love hath past, Friendship remains; and still my fondest hope Is to behold thee happy. Come! — thy hand; Let us be friends! We are so!

Duch. de la Vall. Friends! — no more! So, it hath come to this! I am contented! Yes — we are friends!

Louis. And when your choice is made, You will permit your friend to hail your bridals?

Duch. de la Vall. Ay, when my choice is made!

Louis. This poor De Lauzun Hath then no chance? I'm glad of it, and thus Seal our new bond of friendship on your hand. Adieu! — and Heaven protect you!

[*Exit LOUIS.*]

Duch. de la Vall. [gazing after him]. Heaven hath heard thee;

And in this last most cruel, but most gracious, Proof of thy coldness, breaks the lingering chain That bound my soul to earth.

Enter BRAGELONE.

O holy father!
Brother to him whose grave my guilt prepared,

Witness my firm resolve, support my struggles,
And guide me back to Virtue through Repentance!

Brage. Pause, ere thou dost decide.

Duch. de la Vall. I've paused too
long

And now, impatient of this weary load,
Sigh for repose.

Brage. O Heaven, receive her back!
Through the wide earth, the sorrowing dove hath
flown,
And found no haven; weary though her wing
And sullied with the dust of lengthen'd travail,
Now let her flee away and be at rest!
The peace that man has broken — THOU restore,
Whose holiest name is FATHER!

Duch. de la Vall. Hear us, Heaven.

ACT V. -- SCENE I.

The Gardens at Versailles.

*Enter MADAME DE MONTESPAN, GRAMMONT, and
Courtiers.*

Mme. de Mon. So she has fled from court — the
saintly duchess;

A convent's grate must shield this timorous virtue.
Methinks they're not so many to assail it!

Well, trust me, one short moon of fast and penance
Will bring us back the recreant novice —

Gram. And

End the eventful comedy by marriage.
Lauzun against the world were even odds;
But Lauzun with the world — what saint can stand it?

Mme. de Mon. [aside]. Lauzun! — the traitor!

What! to give my rival
The triumph to reject the lawful love
Of him whose lawless passion first betray'd me!

Gram. Talk of the devil! Humph — you know the
proverb.

Enter LAUZUN.

Lau. Good day, my friends. Your pardon, madam; I

Thought 'twas the sun that blinded me. — [*Aside.*]
Athenè!

Pray you a word.

Mme. de Mon. [aloud, and turning away disdainfully].
We are not at leisure, duke.

Lau. Ha! [*aside.*] Nay, Athenè, spare your friend
these graces.

Forget your state one moment; have you ask'd
The king the office that you undertook

To make my own? My creditors are urgent.

Mme. de Mon. [aloud]. No, my lord duke, I have
not ask'd the king!

I grieve to hear your fortunes are so broken,
And that your honour'd and august device,
To mend them by your marriage, fail'd.

Gram. She hits him

Hard on the hip. Ha, ha! — the poor De Lauzun!

Lau. Sir! — Nay, I'm calm!

Mme. de Mon. Pray, may we dare to ask
How long you've loved the duchess?

Lau. Ever since

You were her friend and confidante.

Mme. de Mon. You're bitter.
Perchance you deem your love a thing to boast of.

Lau. To boast of! — Yes! 'Tis something ev'n
to love

The only woman Louis ever honour'd!

Mme. de Mon. [laying her hand on LAUZUN's arm].
Insolent! You shall rue this! If I speak

Your name to Louis, coupled with a favour,
The suit shall be your banishment!

[*Exit MADAME DE MONTESPAN.*]

First Courtier.

Let's follow.

Ha! ha! — Dear duke, your game, I fear, is lost!
You've play'd the knave, and thrown away the king.

Courtiers. Ha! ha! — Adieu!

[*Exeunt.*]

Lau.

Ha! ha! — The devil

take you!

So, she would ruin me! Fore-arm'd — fore-warn'd!
I have the king's ear yet, and know some secrets
That could destroy her! Since La Vallière's flight,
Louis grows sad and thoughtful, and looks cold
On her vain rival, who too coarsely shows
The world the stuff court ladies' hearts are made of.
She will undo herself — and I will help her.
Weave on thy web, false Montespan, weave on;
The bigger spider shall devour the smaller.
The war's declared — 'tis clear that one must fall: —
I'll be polite — the *lady* to the wall!

[*Exit LAUZUN.*]

SCENE II.

Sunset — the old Château of La Vallière — the Convent of the Carmelites at a distance — the same scene as that with which the play opens.

*Enter the DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE and BRAGELONE
from the Château.*

Duch. de la Vall. Once more, ere yet I take farewell of earth,
I see mine old, familiar, maiden home!
All how unchanged! — The same the hour, the scene,
The very season of the year! — the stillness
Of the smooth wave — the stillness of the trees,
Where the winds sleep like dreams! — and, oh! the calm
Of the blue heavens around yon holy spires,
Pointing, like gospel truths, through calm and storm,
To man's great home!

Brage. [aside]. Oh! how the years recede!
Upon this spot I spoke to her of love,
And dreamt of bliss for earth! [The vesper-bell tolls.

Duch. de la Vall. Hark! the deep sound,
That seems a voice from some invisible spirit,
Claiming the world for God. — When last I heard it
Hallow this air, here stood my mother, living;
And I — was then a mother's pride! — and yonder
Came thy brave brother in his glittering mail;

And — ah! these thoughts are bitter! — were he living,
How would he scorn them!

Brage. [who has been greatly agitated]. No! — ah,
no! — thou wrong'st him!

Duch. de la Vall. Yet, were he living, could I but
receive

From his own lips my pardon, and his blessing,
My soul would deem one dark memorial rased
Out of the page most blister'd with its tears!

Brage. Then have thy wish! and in these wrecks
of man

Worn to decay, and rent by many a storm,
Survey the worm the world call'd Bragelone.

Duch. de la Vall. Avaunt: — avaunt! — I dream!
the dead return'd

To earth to mock me! — No! this hand is warm
I have one murther less upon my soul.
I thank thee, Heaven! — [swoons].

Brage. [supporting her]. The blow strikes home;
and yet

What is my life to her? Louise! — She moves not;
She does not breathe; how still she sleeps! I saw her
Sleep in her mother's arms, and then, in sleep
She smiled. There's no smile now! — poor child! One
kiss!

It is a brother's kiss — it has no guilt;
Kind Heaven, it has no guilt. — I have survived
All earthlier thoughts: her crime, my vows, effaced
them.

A brother's kiss! — Away! I'm human still;

I thought I had been stronger; God forgive me!
Awake, Louise! — awake! She breathes once more;
The spell is broke; the marble warms to life!
And I — freeze back to stone!

Duch. de la Vall. I heard a voice
That cried "Louise!" — Speak, speak! — my sense
is dim,
And struggles darkly with a blessed ray
That shot from heaven. — My shame hath not destroy'd
thee!

Brage. No! — life might yet serve *thee!* — and I
lived on,
Dead to all else. I took the vows, and then,
Ere yet I laid me down, and bade the Past
Fade like a ghost before the dawn of heaven,
One sacred task was left. — If love was dust,
Love, like ourselves, hath an immortal soul,
That doth survive whate'er it takes from clay;
And that — the holier part of love — became
A thing to watch thy steps — a guardian spirit
To hover round, disguised, unknown, undream'd of,
To soothe the sorrow, to redeem the sin,
And lead thy soul to peace!

Duch. de la Vall. O bright revenge!
Love strong as death, and nobler far than woman's!
Brage. To peace — ah, let me deem so! — the
mute cloister,
The spoken ritual, and the solemn veil,
Are nought themselves; — the Huguenot abjures
The monkish cell, but breathes, perchance, the prayer

That speeds as quick to the Eternal Throne!
In our own souls must be the solitude;
In our own thoughts the sanctity! — 'Tis *then*
The feeling that our vows have built the wall
Passion can storm not, nor temptation sap,
Gives calm its charter, roots out wild regret,
And makes the heart the world-disdaining cloister.
This — this is peace! but pause, if in thy breast
Linger the wish of earth. Alas! all oaths
Are vain, if nature shudders to record them —
The subtle spirit 'scapes the seal'd vessel!
The false devotion is the true despair!

Duch. de la Vall. Fear not! — I feel 'tis not the
walls of stone,
Told beads, nor murmur'd hymns, that bind the heart,
Or exorcise the world; the spell's the thought
That where most weak we've banish'd the temptation,
And reconciled, what earth would still divide,
The human memories and the immortal conscience.

Brage. Doubt fades before thine accents. On the
day
That gives thee to the veil we'll meet once more.
Let mine be man's last blessing in this world.
Oh! tell me then, thou'rt happier than thou hast been;
And when we part, I'll seek some hermit cell
Beside the walls that compass thee, and prayer,
Morning and night, shall join our souls in heaven.

Duch. de la Vall. Yes, generous spirit! think not
my future
Shall be repining as the past. Thou livest,

And conscience smiles again. The shatter'd bark
Glides to its haven. Joy! the land is near.

[*Exit DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE into the Château.*

Brage. So, it is past! — the secret is disclosed!
The hand she did reject on earth has led her
To holier ties. I have not lived in vain!
Yet who had dream'd, when through the ranks of war
Went the loud shout of “France and Bragelone!”
That the monk's cowl would close on all my laurels?
A never-heard philosopher is life! —
Our happiest hours are sleep's; and sleep proclaims,
Did we but listen to its warning voice,
That REST is earth's elixir. Why, then, pine
That, ere our years grow feverish with their toil,
Too weary-worn to find the rest they sigh for,
We learn betimes THE MORAL OF REPOSE?
I will lie down, and sleep away this world.
The pause of care, the slumber of tired passion,
Why, why defer till night is well-nigh spent?
When the brief sun that gilt the landscape sets,
When o'er the music on the leaves of life
Chill silence falls, and every fluttering hope
That voiced the world with song has gone to rest,
Then let thy soul, from the poor labourer, learn
“Sleep's sweetest taken soonest!”

[*As he moves away, his eye falls upon a glove dropped by
the DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE — he takes it up.*

And this hath touch'd her hand! — it were a comfort
To hoard a single relic!

[*Kisses the glove, and then suddenly dropping it.*

No! — 'Tis sinful!

[*Exit BRAGELONE*

SCENE III.

The exterior of the Gothic Convent of the Carmelites — The windows illuminated — Music heard from within — A crowd without — Enter Courtiers, Ladies, Priests, &c., and pass through the door of the chapel, in the centre of the building.

Enter LAUZUN from a door in the side wing of the Convent — to him, GRAMMONT.

Lau. Where hast thou left the king?

Gram. Not one league
hence.

Lau. Ere the clock strikes, La Vallière takes the veil.

Gram. Great heaven! so soon! and Louis sent me on,

To learn how thou hadst prosper'd with the duchess.

He is so sanguine — this imperious king,

Who never heard a "No" from living lips!

How did she take his letter?

Lau. In sad silence,
Then mused a little while, and some few tears
Stole down her cheeks, as, with a trembling hand,
She gave me back the scroll.

Gram. You mean her answer.

Lau. No; the king's letter. "Tell him that I thank him;"

(Such were her words;) "but that my choice is made;
And ev'n this last assurance of his love
I dare not keep: 'tis only when I pray,
That I may think of him. This is my answer!"

Gram. No more? — no written word?

Lau. None, Grammont.

Then

She rose and left me; and I heard the bell
Calling the world to see a woman scorn it.

Gram. The king will never brook it. He will grasp
her

Back from this yawning tomb of living souls.
The news came on him with such sudden shock;
The long noviciate thus abridged! and she —
Ever so waxen to his wayward will! —
She cannot yet be marble.

Lau. Wrong'd affection
Makes many a Niobe from tears. Haste Grammont,
Back to the king, and bid him fly to save,
Or nerve his heart to lose, her. I will follow, —
My second charge fulfill'd.

Gram. And what is that?

Lau. Revenge and justice! — Go!

[*Exit GRAMMONT.*

Lau. [looking down the stage]. I hear her laugh —
I catch the glitter of her festive robe!
Athenè comes to triumph — and to tremble!

SCENE IV.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN, Courtiers, and LAUZUN.

Mme. de Mon. [aside]. Now for the crowning cup
of sparkling fortune!

A rarer pearl than Egypt's queen dissolved
I have immersed in that delicious draught,
A woman's triumph o'er a fairer rival!

[As she turns to enter the convent, she perceives LAUZUN.
What! you here, duke!

Lau. Ay, madam; I've not yet
To thank you for — my banishment!

Mme. de Mon. The Ides
Of March are come — not over!

Lau. Are they not?
For some they may be! You are here to witness —

Mme. de Mon. My triumph!

Lau. And to take a friend's condolence
I bear this letter from the king!

Mme. de Mon. The king?

[Reads the letter.
“We do not blame you; blame belongs to love,
And love had nought with you.” — What! what! I
tremble!

“The Duke de Lauzun, of these lines the bearer,
Confirms their purport: from our royal court
We do excuse your presence.” Banish'd, duke?
Is that the word? — What, banish'd!

Lau. Hush! — you mar
The holy silence of the place. 'Tis true;
You read aright. Our gracious king permits you
To quit Versailles. Versailles is not the world.

Mme. de Mon. Perdition! — banish'd!

Lau. You can take the
veil.

Meanwhile, enjoy your triumph!

Mme. de Mon. Triumph! — Ah!
She triumphs o'er me to the last. My soul
Finds hell on earth — and hers makes earth a heaven!

Lau. Hist! — will you walk within?

Mme. de Mon. O, hateful world!
What? — hath it come to this?

Lau. You spoil your triumph!

Mme. de Mon. Lauzun, I thank thee — thank thee
— thank — and curse thee.

[*Exit MADAME DE MONTESPAN.*

Lau. [looking after her with a subdued laugh]. Ha,
ha! — the broken heart can know no pang
Like that which racks the bad heart when its sting
Poisons itself. Now, then, away to Louis.
The bell still tolls: there's time. This soft La Vallière!
The only thing that ever baffled Lauzun,
And felt not his revenge! — revenge, poor soul!
Revenge upon a dove! — she shall be saved
From the pale mummies of yon Memphian vault,
Or the great Louis will be less than man, —
Or that fond sinner will be more than woman.

[*Exit LAUZUN.*

SCENE V.

The interior of the Chapel of the Carmelite Convent — On the foreground, Courtiers, Ladies, &c. — At the back of the stage, the altar, only partially seen through the surrounding throng — The officials pass to and fro, swinging the censers — The stage darkened — Lights suspended along the aisle, and tapers by the altar.

As the scene opens, solemn music, to which is chaunted the following

HYMN.

Come from the world, O weary soul,
For run the race and near the goal!
Flee from the net, O lonely dove,
Thy nest is built the clouds above!
Turn, wild and worn with panting fear,
And slake thy thirst, thou wounded deer,
In Jordan's holy springs!

Arise! O fearful soul, arise!
For broke the chain and calm the skies!
As moths fly upward to the star,
The light allures thee from afar.
Though earth is lost, and space is wide,
The smile of God shall be thy guide,
And Faith and Hope thy wings!

[*As the Hymn ends, BRAGELONE enters, and stands apart in the background.*

First Cour. Three minutes more, and earth has lost
La Vallière!

Second Cour. So young! — so fair!

Third Cour. 'Twas whisper'd, that the king
Would save her yet!

First Cour. What! snatch her from the altar?
He durst not, man!

Enter LOUIS, GRAMMONT, and LAUZUN.

Louis. Hold! we forbid the rites!

[*As the King advances hastily up the aisle, BRAGELONE places himself before him.*

Back monk! revere the presence of the king!

Brage. And thou the palace of the King of kings!

Louis. Dotard! we claim our subject.

Brage. She hath past
The limit of your realm. Ye priests of Heaven,
Complete your solemn task! — The church's curse
Hangs on the air. Descendant of Saint Louis,
Move — and the avalanche falls!

[*The DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE, still dressed in the bridal and gorgeous attire assumed before the taking of the veil, descends from the altar.*

Duch. de la Vall. No, holy friend!
I need it not; my soul is my protector.
Nay, thou mayst trust me.

Brage. [after a pause]. Thou art right. — I trust thee.

Louis [leading the *Duch. de la Vallière* to the front of the stage]. Thou hast not ta'en the veil? —
Ev'n Time had mercy.
Thou art saved! — thou art saved! — to love — to life!
Duch. de la Vall. Ah, sire!

Louis. Call me not sire! — forget that dreary time
When thou wert duchess, and myself the king.
Fly back, fly back, to those delicious hours
When *I* was but thy lover and thy *Louis!*
And thou my dream — my bird — my fairy flower—
My violet, shrinking in the modest shade
Until transplanted to this breast — to haunt
The common air with odours! Oh, Louise!
Hear me! — the fickle lust of change allured me,
The pride thy virtues wounded arm'd against thee,
Until I dream'd I loved thyself no longer;
But now this dread resolve, this awe of parting,
Re-binds me to thee — bares my soul before me —
Dispels the lying mists that veil'd thine image,
And tells me that I never loved but thee!

Duch. de la Vall. I am not then despised! — thou
lov'st me still!

And when I pray for thee, my heart may feel
That it hath nothing to forgive!

Louis. *Louise!*
Thou dost renounce this gloomy purpose!

Duch. de la Vall. *Never!*
It is not gloomy! — think'st thou it is gloom
To feel that, as my soul becomes more pure,
Heaven will more kindly listen to the prayers
That rise for thee? — is that thought *gloom*, my *Louis!*

Louis. Oh! slay me not with tenderness! Return!
And if thy conscience startle at my love,
Be still my friend — my angel!

Duch. de la Vall. *I am weak,*

But, in the knowledge of my weakness, strong!
I could not breathe the air that's sweet with thee,
Nor cease to love! — in flight my only safety;
And were that flight not made by solemn vows
Eternal, it were bootless; for the wings
Of my wild soul know but two bournes to speed to —
Louis and Heaven! And, oh! in Heaven at last
My soul, unsinning, may unite with Louis!

Louis. I do implore thee! —

Duch. de la Vall. No; thou canst not tempt me!
My heart already is the nun.

Louis. Thou know'st not

I have dismiss'd thy rival from the court.
Return! — though mine no more, at least thy Louis
Shall know no second love!

Duch. de la Vall. What! wilt thou, Louis,
Renounce for me eternally my rival,
And live alone for —

Louis. Thee! Louise, I swear it!

Duch. de la Vall. [raising her arms to Heaven]. Father!
at length, I dare to hope for pardon,

For now remorse may prove itself sincere!
Bear witness, Heaven! I never loved this man
So well as now! and never seem'd his love
Built on so sure a rock! Upon thine altar
I lay the offering. I revoke the past;
For Louis, Heaven was left — and now I leave
Louis, when tenfold more beloved, for Heaven!
Ah! pray with me! Be this our latest token —
This memory of sweet moments — sweet, though sinless!

Ah! pray with me! that I may live till death
The thought — “we pray’d together for forgiveness!”

Louis. Oh! wherefore never knew I till this hour
The treasure I shall lose! I dare not call thee
Back from the Heaven where thou art half already!
Thy soul demands celestial destinies,
And stoops no more to earth. Be thine the peace,
And mine the penance! Yet these awful walls,
The rigid laws of this severest order,
Yon spectral shapes, this human sepulchre, —
And thou, the soft, the delicate, the highborn,
The adored delight of Europe’s mightiest king, —
Thou canst not bear it!

Duch. de la Vall. I have borne much worse —
Thy change and thy desertion! — Let it pass!
There is no terror in the things without;
Our souls alone the palace or the prison;
And the one thought that I have fled from sin
Will fill the cell with images more glorious,
And haunt its silence with a mightier music,
Than ever throng’d illumined halls, or broke
From harps by mortal strung!

Louis. I will not hear thee!
I cannot brave these thoughts. Thy angel voice
But tells me what a sun of heavenly beauty
Glides from the earth, and leaves my soul to darkness.
This is *my* work! — ‘twas I for whom that soul
Forsook its native element; for me,
Sorrow consumed thy youth, and conscience gnaw’d
That patient, tender, unreproachful heart.

And now this crowns the whole! the priest — the altar —
 The sacrifice — the victim! Touch me not!
 Speak not! I am unmann'd enough already.
 I — I — I choke! These tears — let them speak for me.
 Now! now thy hand — farewell! farewell, for ever!

[Exit LOUIS.

Duch. de la Vall. Be firm, my heart, be firm!

[After a pause, turning to BRAGELONE, with a slight smile.

'Tis past! we've conquer'd!

[The DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE re-ascends to the altar —
 the crowd close around.

[Music.

CHORUS.

Hark! to the nuptial train are open'd wide
 The Eternal Gates. Hosanna to the bride!

Gram. She has ta'en the veil — the last dread rite is
 done.

Abbess [from the altar]. Sister Louise! before the
 eternal grate

Becomes thy barrier from the living world,
 It is allow'd thee once more to behold

The face of men, and bid farewell to friendship.

Brage. [aside.] Why do I shudder? why shrinks
 back my being

From our last gaze, like Nature from the Grave?
 One moment, and one look, and o'er her image
 Thick darkness falls, till Death, that morning star,
 Heralds immortal day. I hear her steps

Treading the mournful silence; o'er my soul
 Pauses the freezing time. O Lord, support me!
 One effort more — one effort! — Wake, my soul!
 'Tis thy last trial; wilt thou play the craven?

[*The crowd give way, the DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE in the habit of the Carmelite nuns, passes down the steps of the altar, led by the Abbess — As she pauses to address those whom she recognizes in the crowd, the chorus chaunts: —*

Sister, look and speak thy last,
 From the world thou'rt dying fast;
 While farewell to life thou'rt giving,
 Dead already to the living.

Duch. de la Vall. [coming to the front of the stage seen LAUZUN]. Lauzun! thou serv'st a king, what'se'er his faults,
 Who merits all thy homage: honour — love him.
 His glory needs no friendship; but in sickness
 Or sorrow, kings need love. Be faithful, Lauzun.
 And, far from thy loud world, one lowly voice
 Shall not forget thee.

Brage. [aside]. All the strife is hush'd!
 My heart's wild sea lies mute!

Duch. de la Vall. [approaching BRAGELONE, and kneeling to him]. Now! friend and father,
 Bless the poor Nun!

Brage. As Duchess of La Vallière
 Thou wert not happy; as the Carmelite Sister,
 Say — art thou happy?

Duch. de la Vall. Yes!

Brage. [laying his hand on her head]. O Father, bless
her!

CHORUS.

Hark! in heaven is mirth!
Jubilate!
Grief leaves guilt on earth!
Jubilate!
Joy for sin forgiven!
Jubilate!
Come, O Bride of Heaven!
Jubilate!

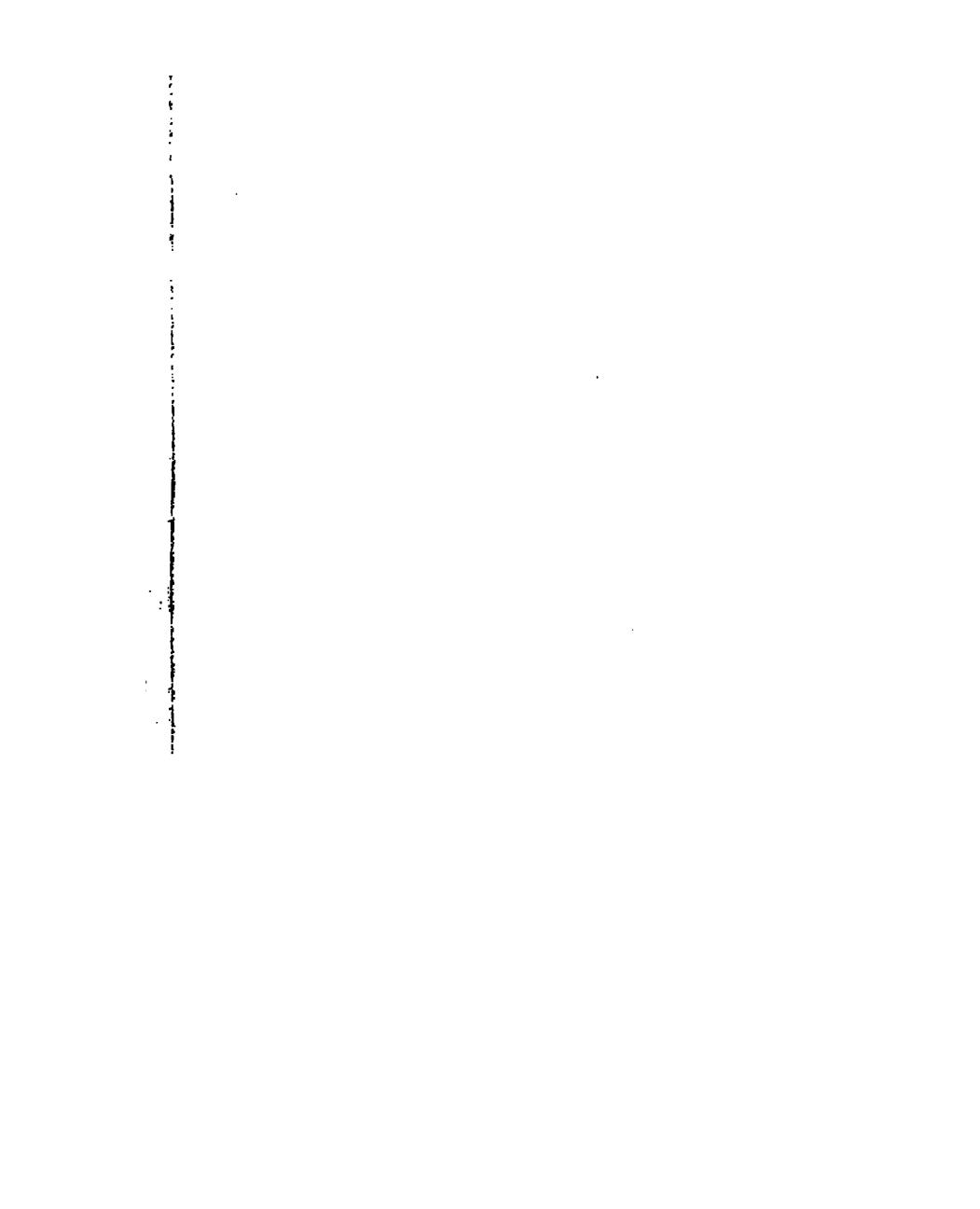
[Curtain falls slowly.

.....

THE LADY OF LYONS;

or,

LOVE AND PRIDE.



PREFACE.

AN indistinct recollection of the very pretty little tale, called "The Bellows-Mender," suggested the plot of this Drama. The incidents are, however, greatly altered from those in the tale, and the characters entirely re-cast.

Having long had a wish to illustrate certain periods of the French history, so, in the selection of the date in which the scenes of this play are laid, I saw that the era of the Republic was that in which the incidents were rendered most probable, in which the probationary career of the hero could well be made sufficiently rapid for dramatic effect, and in which the character of the time itself was depicted by the agencies necessary to the conduct of the narrative. For during the early years of the first and most brilliant successes of the French Republic, in the general ferment of society, and the brief equalization of ranks, Claude's high-placed love, his ardent feelings, his unsettled principles (the struggle between which makes the passion of this drama), his ambition, and his career, were phenomena that characterized the age, and in which the spirit of the nation went along with the extravagance of the individual.

The play itself was composed with a twofold object. In the first place, sympathizing with the enterprise of Mr. Macready, as Manager of Covent Garden,

and believing that many of the higher interests of the Drama were involved in the success or failure of an enterprise equally hazardous and disinterested, I felt, if I may so presume to express myself, something of the Brotherhood of Art; and it was only for Mr. Macready to think it possible that I might serve him in order to induce me to make the attempt.

Secondly, in that attempt I was mainly anxious to see whether or not, after the comparative failure on the stage of "The Duchess de la Vallière," certain critics had truly declared that it was not in my power to attain the art of dramatic construction and theatrical effect. I felt, indeed, that it was in this that a writer, accustomed to the narrative class of composition, would have the most both to learn and *unlearn*. Accordingly, it was to the development of the plot and the arrangement of the incidents that I directed my chief attention; — and I sought to throw whatever belongs to poetry less into the diction and the "felicity of words" than into the construction of the story, the creation of the characters, and the spirit of the pervading sentiment.

The authorship of the play was neither avowed nor suspected until the play had established itself in public favour. The announcement of my name was the signal for attacks, chiefly political, to which it is now needless to refer. When a work has outlived for some time the earlier hostilities of criticism, there comes a new race of critics to which a writer may, for the most part, calmly trust for a fair consideration, whether of the faults or the merits of his performance.

TO
THE AUTHOR OF "ION,"

WHOSE GENIUS AND EXAMPLE HAVE ALIKE CONTRIBUTED
TOWARDS THE REGENERATION OF

THE NATIONAL DRAMA,
THIS PLAY IS INSCRIBED.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

BEAUSÉANT, *a rich gentleman of Lyons, in love with, and refused by, Pauline Deschappelles.*

GLAVIS, *his friend, also a rejected suitor to Pauline.*

COLONEL (afterwards General) DAMAS, *cousin to Mme. Deschappelles, and an officer in the French army.*

MONSIEUR DESCHAPPELLES, *a Lyonnese merchant, father to Pauline.*

LANDLORD OF THE GOLDEN LION.

GASPAR.

CLAUDE MELNOTTE.

FIRST OFFICER, SECOND OFFICER, THIRD OFFICER.

Servants, Notary, &c.

MADAME DESCHAPPELLES.

PAULINE, *her daughter.*

THE WIDOW MELNOTTE, *mother to Claude.*

JANET, *the innkeeper's daughter.*

MARIAN, *maid to Pauline.*

Scene — Lyons and the neighbourhood.

Time — 1795-1798.

THE LADY OF LYONS;

OR,

LOVE AND PRIDE.

ACT I. — SCENE I.

A room in the house of M. DESCHAPPELLES, at Lyons. PAULINE reclining on a sofa; MARIAN, her maid fanning her — Flowers and notes on a table beside the sofa — MADAME DESCHAPPELLES seated — The gardens are seen from the open window.

Mme. Deschap. Marian, put that rose a little more to the left. — [MARIAN alters the position of a rose in PAULINE's hair.] — Ah, so! — that improves the hair, — the *tournure*, the *je ne sais quoi!* — You are certainly very handsome, child! — quite my style; — I don't wonder that you make such a sensation! — Old, young, rich, and poor, do homage to the Beauty of Lyons! — Ah, we live again in our children, — especially when they have our eyes and complexion!

Pauline [*languidly*]. Dear mother, you spoil your Pauline! — [*Aside.*] I wish I knew who sent me these flowers!

Mme. Deschap. No, child! — If I praise you, it is only to inspire you with a proper ambition. — You are born to make a great marriage. — Beauty is valuable or worthless according as you invest the property to the best advantage. — Marian, go and order the carriage!

[*Exit Marian.*]

Pauline. Who can it be that sends me, every day, these beautiful flowers? — how sweet they are!

Enter Servant.

Servant. Monsieur Beauseant, madam.

Mme. Deschap. Let him enter. Pauline, this is another offer! — I know it is! — Your father should engage an additional clerk to keep the account-book of your conquests.

Enter BEAUSEANT.

Beau. Ah, ladies, how fortunate I am to find you at home! — [*Aside.*] How lovely she looks! — It is a great sacrifice I make in marrying into a family in trade! — they will be eternally grateful! — [*Aloud.*] Madam, you will permit me a word with your charming daughter. — [*Approaches PAULINE, who rises disdainfully.*] — Mademoiselle, I have ventured to wait upon you, in a hope that you must long since have divined. Last night, when you outshone all the beauty of Lyons, you completed your conquest over me! You know that my fortune is not exceeded by any estate in the province, — you know that, but for the Revolution, which

has defrauded me of my titles, I should be noble. May I, then, trust that you will not reject my alliance? I offer you my hand and heart.

Pauline [aside]. He has the air of a man who confers a favour! — [Aloud.] Sir, you are very condescending — I thank you humbly; but, being duly sensible of my own demerits, you must allow me to decline the honour you propose.

[*Curtsies, and turns away.*]

Beau. Decline! impossible! — you are not serious! — Madam, suffer me to appeal to *you*. I am a suitor for your daughter's hand — the settlements shall be worthy her beauty and my station. May I wait on M. Deschappelles?

Mme. Deschap. M. Deschappelles never interferes in the domestic arrangements, — you are very obliging. If you were still a marquis, or if my daughter were intended to marry a commoner, — why, perhaps, we might give you the preference.

Beau. A commoner! — we are all commoners in France now.

Mme. Deschap. In France, yes; but there is a nobility still left in the other countries in Europe. We are quite aware of your good qualities, and don't doubt that you will find some lady more suitable to your pretensions. We shall be always happy to see you as an acquaintance, M. Beauseant! — My dear child, the carriage will be here presently.

Beau. Say no more, madam! — say no more! —

[*Aside*]. Refused! and by a merchant's daughter! — refused! It will be all over Lyons before sunset! — I will go and bury myself in my château, study philosophy, and turn woman-hater. Refused! they ought to be sent to a madhouse! — Ladies, I have the honour to wish you a very good morning. [Exit.]

Mme. Deschap. How forward these men are! — I think, child, we kept up our dignity. Any girl, however inexperienced, knows how to accept an offer, but it requires a vast deal of address to refuse one with proper condescension and disdain. I used to practise it at school with the dancing-master.

Enter DAMAS.

Damas. Good morning, cousin Deschappelles. — Well, Pauline, are you recovered from last night's ball? — So many triumphs must be very fatiguing. Even M. Glavis sighed most piteously when you departed; but that might be the effect of the supper.

Pauline. M. Glavis, indeed!

Mme. Deschap. M. Glavis? — as if my daughter would think of M. Glavis!

Damas. Hey-day! — why not? — His father left him a very pretty fortune, and his birth is higher than yours, cousin Deschappelles. But perhaps you are looking to M. Beauseant, — his father was a marquis before the Revolution.

Pauline. M. Beauseant! — Cousin, you delight in tormenting me!

Mme. Deschap. Don't mind him, Pauline! — Cousin Damas, you have no susceptibility of feeling, — there is a certain indelicacy in all your ideas. — M. Beau-seant knows already that he is no match for my daughter!

Damas. Pooh! pooh! one would think you intended your daughter to marry a prince!

Mme. Deschap. Well, and if I did? — what then? — Many a foreign prince —

Damas [interrupting her]. Foreign prince! — foreign fiddlestick! — you ought to be ashamed of such nonsense at your time of life.

Mme. Deschap. My time of life! — That is an expression never applied to any lady till she is sixty-nine and three-quarters; — and only then by the clergyman of the parish.

Enter Servant.

Servant. Madame, the carriage is at the door.

[*Exit.*]

Mme. Deschap. Come, child, put on your bonnet — you really have a very thorough-bred air — not at all like your poor father. — [*Fondly.*] Ah, you little coquette! when a young lady is always making mischief, it is a sure sign that she takes after her mother!

Pauline. Good day, cousin Damas — and a better humour to you. — [*Going back to the table and taking the flowers.*] Who could have sent me these flowers?

[*Ereunt PAULINE and MADAME DESCHAPPELLES.*

Damas. That would be an excellent girl if her head had not been turned. I fear she is now become incorrigible! Zounds, what a lucky fellow I am to be still a bachelor! They may talk of the devotion of the sex — but the most faithful attachment in life is that of a woman in love — with herself. [Exit]

SCENE II.

The exterior of a small Village Inn — sign, the Golden Lion — a few leagues from Lyons, which is seen at a distance.

Beau. [behind the scenes]. Yes, you may bait the horses; we shall rest here an hour.

Enter BEAUSEANT and GLAVIS.

Gla. Really, my dear Beauseant, consider that I have promised to spend a day or two with you at your château, — that I am quite at your mercy for my entertainment, — and yet you are as silent and as gloomy as a mute at a funeral, or an Englishman at a party of pleasure.

Beau. Bear with me; — the fact is that I am miserable.

Gla. You — the richest and gayest bachelor in Lyons?

Beau. It is because I am a bachelor that I am miserable. — Thou knowest Pauline — the only daughter of the rich merchant, Mons. Deschappelles?

Gla. Know her? — who does not? — as pretty as Venus, and as proud as Juno.

Beau. Her taste is worse than her pride. — [Drawing himself up.] Know, Glavis, she has actually refused me!

Gla. [aside]. So she has me! — very consoling! In all cases of heart-ache, the application of another man's disappointment draws out the pain and allays the irritation. — [Aloud.] Refused you! and wherefore?

Beau. I know not, unless it be because the Revolution swept away my father's title of Marquis, — and she will not marry a commoner. Now, as we have no noblemen left in France, — as we are all citizens and equals, she can only hope that, in spite of the war, some English Milord or German Count will risk his life, by coming to Lyons, that this *fille du Roturier* may condescend to accept him. Refused me, and with scorn! — By Heaven, I'll not submit to it tamely: — I'm in a perfect fever of mortification and rage. — Refuse me, indeed!

Gla. Be comforted, my dear fellow, — I will tell you a secret. For the same reason she refused ME!

Beau. You! — that's a very different matter! But give me your hand, Glavis, — we'll think of some plan to humble her. *Mille diables!* I should like to see her married to a strolling player!

Enter Landlord and his Daughter from the Inn.

Land. Your servant, citizen Beauseant, — servant, sir. Perhaps you will take dinner before you proceed to your château; our larder is most plentifully supplied.

Beau. I have no appetite.

Gla. Nor I. Still it is bad travelling on an empty stomach. What have you got? [Takes and looks over the bill of fare.]

[Shout without.] "Long live the Prince! — Long live the Prince!"

Beau. The Prince! — what Prince is that? I thought we had no princes left in France.

Land. Ha, ha! the lads always call him Prince. He has just won the prize in the shooting-match, and they are taking him home in triumph.

Beau. Him! and who's Mr. Him?

Land. Who should he be but the pride of the village, Claude Melnotte? — Of course you have heard of Claude Melnotte?

Gla. [giving back the bill of fare]. Never had that honour. Soup — ragout of hare — roast chicken, and in short, all you have!

Beau. The son of old Melnotte, the gardener?

Land. Exactly so — a wonderful young man.

Beau. How, wonderful? — Are his cabbages better than other people's?

Land. Nay, he don't garden any more; his father left him well off. He's only a genius.

Gla. A what?

Land. A genius! — a man who can do everything in life except anything that's useful; — that's a genius.

Beau. You raise my curiosity; — proceed.

Land. Well, then, about four years ago, old Melnotte died, and left his son well to do in the world.

We then all observed that a great change came over young Claude: he took to reading and Latin, and hired a professor from Lyons, who had so much in his head that he was forced to wear a great full-bottom wig to cover it. Then he took a fencing-master, and a dancing-master, and a music-master; and then he learned to paint; and at last it was said that young Claude was to go to Paris, and set up for a painter. The lads laughed at him at first; but he is a stout fellow, is Claude, and as brave as a lion, and soon taught them to laugh the wrong side of their mouths; and now all the boys swear by him, and all the girls pray for him.

Beau. A promising youth, certainly! And why do they call him Prince?

Land. Partly because he is at the head of them all, and partly because he has such a proud way with him, and wears such fine clothes — and, in short, looks like a prince.

Beau. And what could have turned the foolish fellow's brain? The Revolution, I suppose?

Land. Yes — the revolution that turns us all topsy-turvy — the revolution of Love.

Beau. Romantic young Corydon! And with whom is he in love?

Land. Why — but it is a secret, gentlemen.

Beau. Oh! certainly.

Land. Why, then, I hear from his mother, good soul! that it is no less a person than the Beauty of Lyons, Pauline Deschappelles.

Beau. and Glavis. Ha, ha! — Capital!

Land. You may laugh, but it is as true as I stand here.

Beau. And what does the Beauty of Lyons say to his suit?

Land. Lord, sir, she never even condescended to look at him, though when he was a boy he worked in her father's garden.

Beau. Are you sure of that?

Land. His mother says that Mademoiselle does not know him by sight.

Beau. [taking GLAVIS aside]. I have hit it, — I have it; — here is our revenge! Here is a prince for our haughty damsel. Do you take me?

Gla. Deuce take me if I do!

Beau. Blockhead! — it's as clear as a map. What if we could make this elegant clown pass himself off as a foreign prince? — lend him money, clothes, equipage for the purpose? — make him propose to Pauline? — marry Pauline? Would it not be delicious?

Gla. Ha, ha! — Excellent! But how shall we support the necessary expenses of his highness?

Beau. Pshaw! Revenge is worth a much larger sacrifice than a few hundred louis; — as for details, my valet is the trustiest fellow in the world, and shall have the appointment of his highness's establishment. Let's go to him at once, and see if he be really this Admirable Crichton.

Gla. With all my heart; — but the dinner?

Beau. Always thinking of dinner! Hark ye, land-

lord; how far is it to young Melnotte's cottage? I should like to see such a prodigy.

Land. Turn down the lane, — then strike across the common, — and you will see his mother's cottage.

Beau. True, he lives with his mother. — [*Aside.*] We will not trust to an old woman's discretion; better send for him hither. I'll just step in and write him a note. Come, Glavis.

Gla. Yes, — Beauseant, Glavis, and Co., manufacturers of princes, wholesale and retail, — an uncommonly genteel line of business. But why so grave?

Beau. You think only of the sport, — I of the revenge.

[*Exeunt within the Inn.*

SCENE III.

The interior of MELNOTTE's cottage; flowers placed here and there; a guitar on an oaken table, with a portfolio, &c.; a picture on an easel, covered by a curtain; fencing-foils crossed over the mantelpiece; an attempt at refinement in spite of the homeliness of the furniture, &c.; a staircase to the right conducts to the upper story.

[*Shout without.*] “Long live Claude Melnotte!”
“Long live the Prince!”

The Widow Mel. Hark! — there's my dear son; — carried off the prize, I'm sure; and now he'll want to treat them all.

Claude Mel. [opening the door]. What! you will not

come in, my friends! Well, well, — there's a trifle to make merry elsewhere. Good day to you all, — good day!

[*Shout.*] "Hurrah! Long live Prince Claude!"

Enter CLAUDE MELNOTTE, with a rifle in his hand.

Mel. Give me joy, dear mother! — I've won the prize! — never missed one shot! Is it not handsome, this gun?

Widow. Humph! — Well, what is it worth, Claude?

Mel. Worth! What is a riband worth to a soldier? Worth! everything! Glory is priceless!

Widow. Leave glory to great folks. Ah! Claude, Claude, castles in the air cost a vast deal to keep up! How is all this to end? What good does it do thee to learn Latin, and sing songs, and play on the guitar, and fence, and dance, and paint pictures? All very fine; but what does it bring in?

Mel. Wealth! wealth, my mother! Wealth to the mind — wealth to the heart — high thoughts — bright dreams — the hope of fame — the ambition to be worthier to love Pauline.

Widow. My poor son! — The young lady will never think of thee.

Mel. Do the stars think of us? Yet if the prisoner see them shine into his dungeon, wouldest thou bid him turn away from *their* lustre? Even so from this low cell, poverty, I lift my eyes to Pauline and forget my

chains. — [Goes to the picture and draws aside the curtain.] See, this is her image — painted from memory. Oh, how the canvas wrongs her! — [Takes up the brush and throws it aside.] I shall never be a painter! I can paint no likeness but one, and that is above all art. I would turn soldier — France needs soldiers! But to leave the air that Pauline breathes! What is the hour? — so late? I will tell thee a secret, mother. Thou knowest that for the last six weeks I have sent every day the rarest flowers to Pauline? — she wears them. I have seen them on her breast. Ah, and then the whole universe seemed filled with odours! I have now grown more bold — I have poured my worship into poetry — I have sent the verses to Pauline — I have signed them with my own name. My messenger ought to be back by this time. I bade him wait for the answer.

Widow. And what answer do you expect, Claude?

Mel. That which the Queen of Navarre sent to the poor troubadour: — “Let me see the Oracle that can tell nations I am beautiful!” She will admit me. I shall hear her speak — I shall meet her eyes — I shall read upon her cheek the sweet thoughts that translate themselves into blushes. Then — then, oh, then — she may forget that I am the peasant’s son!

Widow. Nay, if she will but hear thee talk, Claude?

Mel. I foresee it all. She will tell me that desert is the true rank. She will give me a badge — a flower — a glove! Oh rapture! I shall join the armies of the republic — I shall rise — I shall win a name

that beauty will not blush to hear. I shall return with the right to say to her — “See, how love does no level the proud, but raise the humble!” Oh, how my heart swells within me! — Oh, what glorious prophets of the future are youth and hope!

[Knock at the door.]

Widow. Come in.

Enter GASPAR.

Mel. Welcome, Gaspar, welcome. Where is the letter? Why do you turn away, man? where is the letter? [GASPAR gives him one.] This! This is mine, the one I intrusted to thee. Didst thou not leave it?

Gaspar. Yes, I left it.

Mel. My own verses returned to me. Nothing else!

Gaspar. Thou wilt be proud to hear how thy messenger was honoured. For thy sake, Melnotte, I have borne that which no Frenchman can bear without disgrace.

Mel. Disgrace, Gaspar! Disgrace?

Gaspar. I gave thy letter to the porter, who passed it from lackey to lackey till it reached the lady it was meant for.

Mel. It reached her, then; — you are sure of that! It reached her, — well, well!

Gaspar. It reached her, and was returned to me with blows. Dost hear, Melnotte? with blows! Death! are we slaves still, that we are to be thus dealt with, we peasants?

Mel. With blows? No, Gaspar, no; not blows!

Gaspar. I could show thee the marks if it were not so deep a shame to bear them. The lackey who tossed thy letter into the mire swore that his lady and her mother never were so insulted. What could thy letter contain, Claude?

Mel. [looking over the letter]. Not a line that a serf might not have written to an empress. No, not one.

Gaspar. They promise thee the same greeting they gave me, if thou wilt pass that way. Shall we endure this, Claude?

Mel. [wringing GASPAR's hand]. Forgive me, the fault was mine, I have brought this on thee; I will not forget it; thou shalt be avenged! The heartless insolence!

Gaspar. Thou art moved, Melnotte; think not of me; I would go through fire and water to serve thee; but, — a blow! It is not the *bruise* that galls, — it is the *blush*, Melnotte.

Mel. Say, what message? — How insulted! — Wherefore? — What the offence?

Gaspar. Did you not write to Pauline Deschappelles, the daughter of the rich merchant?

Mel. Well? —

Gaspar. And are you not a peasant — a gardener's son? — that was the offence. Sleep on it, Melnotte. Blows to a French citizen, blows! [Exit.

Widow. Now you are cured, Claude!

Mel. [tearing the letter]. So do I scatter her image to the winds — I will stop her in the open streets — I will insult her — I will beat her menial ruffians — I

will — [Turns suddenly to Widow.] Mother, am I hump-backed — deformed — hideous?

Widow. You!

Mel. A coward — a thief — a liar?

Widow. You!

Mel. Or a dull fool — a vain, drivelling, brainless idiot?

Widow. No, no.

Mel. What am I then — worse than all these? Why, I am a peasant! What has a peasant to do with love? Vain revolutions, why lavish your cruelty on the great? Oh that we — we, the hewers of wood and drawers of water — had been swept away, so that the proud might learn what the world would be without us! —

[Knock at the door.

Enter Servant from the Inn.

Servant. A letter for Citizen Melnotte.

Mel. A letter! from her perhaps — who sent thee?

Servant. Why, Monsieur — I mean Citizen — Beaueseant, who stops to dine at the Golden Lion, en his way to his château.

Mel. Beaueseant! — [Reads.]

“Young man, I know thy secret — thou lovest above thy station: if thou hast wit, courage, and discretion, I can secure to thee the realization of thy most sanguine hopes; and the sole condition I ask in return is, that thou shalt be steadfast to thine own ends. I shall demand from thee a solemn oath to marry her whom thou lovest; to bear her to thine home on thy

wedding night. I am serious — if thou wouldest learn more, lose not a moment, but follow the bearer of this letter to thy friend and patron. — CHARLES BEAUSEANT."

Mel. Can I believe my eyes? Are our own passions the sorcerers that raise up for us spirits of good or evil? I will go instantly.

Widow. What is this, Claude?

Mel. "Marry her whom thou lovest" — "bear her to thine own home." — Oh, revenge and love; which of you is the stronger? — [*Gazing on the picture.*] Sweet face, thou smilest on me from the canvas: weak fool that I am, do I then love her still? No, it is the vision of my own romance that I have worshipped: it is the reality to which I bring scorn for scorn. Adieu, mother: I will return anon. My brain reels — the earth swims before me. — [*Looks again at the letter.*] No, it is *not* a mockery; I do *not* dream! [Exit.

ACT II. — SCENE I.

The gardens of M. DESCHAPPELLES' house at Lyons — the hour seen at the back of the stage.

Enter BEAUSEANT and GLAVIS.

Beau. Well, what think you of my plot? Has it not succeeded to a miracle? The instant that I introduced his Highness the Prince of Como to the pompous mother and the scornful daughter, it was all over with them: he came — he saw — he conquered: and, though it is not many days since he arrived, they have already promised him the hand of Pauline.

Gla. It is lucky, though, that you told them his highness travelled incognito, for fear the Directory (who are not very fond of princes) should lay him by the heels; for he has a wonderful wish to keep up his rank, and scatters our gold about with as much coolness as if he were watering his own flower-pots.

Beau. True, he is damnably extravagant; I think the sly dog does it out of malice. However, it must be owned that he reflects credit on his loyal subjects, and makes a very pretty figure in his fine clothes, with my diamond snuff-box.

Gla. And my diamond ring! But do you think he will be firm to the last? I fancy I see symptoms of relenting: he will never keep up his rank, if he once let out his conscience.

Beau. His oath binds him! he cannot retract without being forsown, and those low fellows are always superstitious! But, as it is, I tremble lest he be discovered: that bluff Colonel Damas (Madame Deschappelles' cousin) evidently suspects him: we must make haste and conclude the farce: I have thought of a plan to end it this very day.

Gla. This very day! Poor Pauline: her dream will be soon over.

Beau. Yes, this day they shall be married; this evening, according to his oath, he shall carry his bride to the Golden Lion, and then pomp, equipage, retinue, and title, all shall vanish at once; and her Highness the Princess shall find that she has refused the son of a Marquis, to marry the son of the gardener. — Oh, Pauline! once loved, now hated, yet still not relinquished, thou shalt drain the cup to the dregs, — thou shalt know what it is to be humbled!

Enter from the house, MELNOTTE, as the Prince of Como, leading in PAULINE; MADAME DESCHAPPELLES, fanning herself; and COLONEL DAMAS.

[*BEAUSEANT and GLAVIS bow respectfully. PAULINE and MELNOTTE walk apart*

Mme. Deschap. Good morning, gentlemen; really I am so fatigued with laughter; the dear Prince is so

entertaining. What wit he has! Any one may see that he has spent his whole life in courts.

Damas. And what the deuce do you know about courts, cousin Deschappelles? You women regard men just as you buy books — you never care about what is in them, but how they are bound and lettered 'Sdeath, I don't think you would even look at your Bible if it had not a title to it.

Mme. Deschap. How coarse you are, cousin Damas! — quite the manners of a barrack — you don't deserve to be one of our family; really we must drop your acquaintance when Pauline marries. I cannot patronize any relations that would discredit my future son-in-law, the Prince of Como.

Mel. [advancing]. These are beautiful gardens, madame, (*BEAUSEANT and GLAVIS retire*) — who planned them?

Mme. Deschap. A gardener named Melnotte, your highness — an honest man who knew his station. I can't say as much for his son — a presuming fellow, who — ha! ha! actually wrote verses — such doggerel! — to my daughter.

Pauline. Yes, how you would have laughed at them, Prince! — you, who write such beautiful verses!

Mel. This Melnotte must be a monstrous impudent person!

Damas. Is he good-looking?

Mme. Deschap. I never notice such *canaille* — an ugly, mean-looking clown, if I remember right.

Damas. Yet I heard your porter say he was wonderfully like his highness.

Mel. [taking snuff]. You are complimentary.

Mme. Deschap. For shame, cousin Damas! — like the Prince, indeed!

Pauline. Like you! Ah, mother, like our beautiful prince! I'll never speak to you again, cousin Damas.

Mel. [aside]. Humph! — rank is a great beautifier! I never passed for an Apollo while I was a peasant; if I am so handsome as a prince, what should I be as an emperor! [Aloud.] Monsieur Beauseant, will you honour me? [Offers snuff.]

Beau. No, your highness; I have no small vices.

Mel. Nay, if it were a vice, you'd be sure to have it, Monsieur Beauseant.

Mme Deschap. Ha! ha! — how very severe! — what wit!

Beau. [in a rage and aside]. Curse his impertinence!

Mme. Deschap. What a superb snuff-box!

Pauline. And what a beautiful ring!

Mel. You like the box — a trifle — interesting perhaps from associations — a present from Louis XIV. to my great-great-grandmother. Honour me by accepting it.

Beau. [plucking him by the sleeve]. How! — what the devil! My box — are you mad? It is worth five hundred louis.

Mel. [unheeding him, and turning to PAULINE]. And you like this ring? Ah, it has, indeed, a lustre since your eyes have shone on it [placing it on her finger].

Henceforth hold me, sweet enchantress, the Slave of the Ring.

Gla. [pulling him]. Stay, stay — what are you about? My maiden aunt's legacy — a diamond of the first water. You shall be hanged for swindling, sir.

Mel. [pretending not to hear]. It is curious, this ring; it is the one with which my grandfather, the Doge of Venice, married the Adriatic!

[MADAME and PAULINE examine the ring.

Mel. [to BEAUSEANT and GLAVIS]. Fie, gentlemen! princes must be generous? — [Turns to DAMAS, who watches them closely.] These kind friends have my interest so much at heart, that they are as careful of my property as if it were their own!

Beau. and *Gla.* [confusedly]. Ha! ha! — very good joke that!

[Appear to remonstrate with MELNOTTE in dumb show.

Damas. What's all that whispering? I am sure there is some juggle here: hang me, if I think he is an Italian after all. Gad, I'll try him. Servitore umilissimo, Eccellenza.*

Mel. Hum — what does he mean, I wonder?

Damas. Godo di vedervi in buona salute.**

Mel. Hem — hem!

Damas. Fa bel tempo — che si dice di nuovo?***

* Your Excellency's most humble servant.

** I am glad to see you in good health.

*** Fine weather. What news is there?

Mel. Well, sir, what's all that gibberish?

Damas. Oh, oh! — only Italian, your highness! — The Prince of Como does not understand his own language!

Mel. Not as you pronounce it; who the deuce could?

Mme. Deschap. Ha! ha! cousin Damas, never pretend to what you don't know.

Pauline. Ha! ha! cousin Damas; you speak Italian, indeed! [Makes a mocking gesture at him.]

Beau. [to GLAVIS]. Clever dog! — how ready!

Gla. Ready, yes; with my diamond ring! — Damn his readiness!

Damas. Laugh at me! — laugh at a colonel in the French army! — the fellow's an impostor; I know he is. I'll see if he understands fighting as well as he does Italian. — [Goes up to him, and aside.] Sir, you are a jackanapes! — Can you construe that?

Mel. No, sir; I never construe affronts in the presence of ladies; by-and-by I shall be happy to take a lesson — or give one.

Damas. I'll find the occasion, never fear!

Mme. Deschap. Where are you going, cousin?

Damas. To correct my Italian. [Exit.]

Beau. [to GLAVIS]. Let us after, and pacify him; he evidently suspects something.

Gla. Yes! — but my diamond ring!

Beau. And my box! — We are over-taxed, fellow-subjects! — we must stop the supplies, and dethrone the prince.

Gla. Prince! — he ought to be heir-apparent to King Stork. [Exeunt BEAUSEANT and GLAVIS.

Mme. Deschap. Dare I ask your highness to forgive my cousin's insufferable vulgarity?

Pauline. Oh yes! — you will forgive his manner for the sake of his heart.

Mel. And the sake of his cousin. — Ah, madam, there is one comfort in rank, — we are so sure of our position that we are not easily affronted. Besides M. Damas has bought the right of indulgence from his friends, by never showing it to his enemies.

Pauline. Ah! he is, indeed, as brave in action as he is rude in speech. He rose from the ranks to his present grade, and in two years!

Mel. In two years! — two years, did you say?

Mme. Deschap. [aside]. I don't like leaving girls alone with their lovers; but, with a prince, it would be so illbred to be prudish. [Exit.

Mel. You can be proud of your connection with one who owes his position to merit, — not birth.

Pauline. Why, yes; but still —

Mel. Still what, Pauline!

Pauline. There is something glorious in the heritage of command. A man who has ancestors is like a representative of the past.

Mel. True; but, like other representatives, nine times out of ten he is a silent member. Ah, Pauline! not to the past, but to the future, looks true nobility, and finds its blazon in posterity.

Pauline. You say this to please me, who have no

ancestors; but you, prince, must be proud of so illustrious a race!

Mel. No, no! I would not, were I fifty times a prince, be a pensioner on the dead! I honour birth and ancestry when they are regarded as the incentives to exertion, not the title-deeds to sloth! I honour the laurels that overshadow the graves of our fathers; — it is our fathers I emulate, when I desire that beneath the evergreen I myself have planted my own ashes may repose! Dearest! couldst thou but see with my eyes!

Pauline. I cannot forego pride when I look on thee, and think that thou lovest me. Sweet Prince, tell me again of thy palace by the Lake of Como; it is so pleasant to hear of thy splendours since thou didst swear to me that they would be desolate without Pauline; and when thou describest them, it is with a mocking lip and a noble scorn, as if custom had made thee disdain greatness.

Mel. Nay, dearest, nay, if thou wouldest have me paint

The home to which, could love fulfil its prayers,
This hand would lead thee, listen!* — A deep vale

* The reader will observe that Melnotte evades the request of Pauline. He proceeds to describe a home, which he does not say he possesses, but to which he would lead her, "*could Love fulfil its prayers.*" This caution is intended as a reply to a sagacious critic who censures the description because it is not an exact and prosaic inventory of the characteristics of the Lake of Como! — When Melnotte, for instance, talks of birds "that syllable the name of Pauline" (by the way, a literal translation from an Italian poet), he is not thinking of ornithology, but probably of the Arabian Nights. He is venting the extravagant, but natural, enthusiasm of the poet and the lover.

Shut out by Alpine hills from the rude world
Near a clear lake, margin'd by fruits of gold
And whispering myrtles; glassing softest skies,
As cloudless, save with rare and roseate shadows,
As I would have thy fate!

Pauline. My own dear love!

Mel. A palace lifting to eternal summer
Its marble walls, from out a glossy bower
Of coolest foliage musical with birds,
Whose songs should syllable thy name! At noon
We'd sit beneath the arching vines, and wonder
Why Earth could be unhappy, while the Heavens
Still left us youth and love! We'd have no friends
That were not lovers; no ambition, save
To excel them all in love; we'd read no books
That were not tales of love — that we might smile
To think how poorly eloquence of words
Translates the poetry of hearts like ours!
And when night came, amidst the breathless Heavens
We'd guess what star should be our home when love
Becomes immortal; while the perfumed light
Stole through the mists of alabaster lamps,
And every air was heavy with the sighs
Of orange-groves and music from sweet lutes,
And murmurs of low fountains that gush forth
I' the midst of roses! — Dost thou like the picture?

Pauline. Oh, as the bee upon the flower, I hang
Upon the honey of thy eloquent tongue!
Am I not blest? And if I love too wildly,
Who would not love thee like Pauline?

Pauline. Thou wrong'st me, cruel Prince!
At first, in truth, I might not have been won,
Save through the weakness of a flatter'd pride;
But now, — oh! trust me, — couldst thou fall from
power

And sink —

Mel. As low as that poor gardener's son
Who dared to lift his eyes to thee? —

Pauline. Even then
Methinks thou wouldst be only made more dear
By the sweet thought that I could prove how deep
Is woman's love! We are like the insects, caught
By the poor glittering of a garish flame;
But, oh, the wings once scorch'd, the brightest star
Lures us no more; and by the fatal light
We cling till death!

Mel. Angel!

[*Aside.*] O conscience! conscience!
It must not be; — her love hath grown a torture
Worse than her hate. I will at once to Beaumont,
And — ha! he comes. Sweet love, one moment leave me.
I have business with these gentlemen — I — I
Will forthwith join you.

Pauline. Do not tarry long! [Exit.

Enter BEAUSEANT and GLAVIS.

Mel. Release me from my oath, — I will not marry her!

Beau. Then thou art perjured.

Mel. No, I was not in my senses when I swore to thee to marry her! I was blind to all but her scorn — deaf to all but my passion and my rage! Give me back my poverty and my honour!

Beau. It is too late, you must marry her! and this day. I have a story already coined, and sure to pass current. This Damas suspects thee, — he will set the police to work; — thou wilt be detected — Pauline will despise and execrate thee. Thou will be sent to the common gaol as a swindler.

Mel. Fiend!

Beau. And in the heat of the girl's resentment (you know of what resentment is capable), and the parents' shame, she will be induced to marry the first that offers — even perhaps your humble servant.

Mel. You! No; that were worse — for thou hast no mercy! I will marry her — I will keep my oath. Quick, then, with the damnable invention thou art hatching — quick, if thou wouldest not have me strangle thee of myself.

Gla. What a tiger! Too fierce for a prince; — he ought to have been the Grand Turk.

Beau. Enough — I will despatch; be prepared.

[*Exeunt BEAUSEANT and GLAVIS.*]

Enter DAMAS with two swords.

Damas. Now, then, sir, the ladies are no longer your excuse. I have brought you a couple of dictionaries; let us see if your Highness can find out the Latin for *bilbo*.

Mel. Away, sir! I am in no humour for jesting.

Damas. I see you understand something of the grammar; you decline the noun-substantive “small-sword” with great ease; but that won’t do — you must take a lesson in *parsing*.

Mel. Fool!

Damas. Sir, as sons take after their mother, so the man who calls me a fool insults the lady who bore me; there’s no escape for you — fight you shall, or —

Mel. Oh, enough! enough! — take your ground.

[*They fight; DAMAS is disarmed. MELNOTTE takes up the sword and returns it to DAMAS respectfully.*

A just punishment to the brave soldier who robs the State of its best property — the sole right to his valour and his life.

Damas. Sir, you fence exceedingly well; you must be a man of honour — I don’t care a jot whether you are a prince; but a man who has *carte and tierce* at his fingers’ ends must be a gentleman.

Mel. [aside]. Gentleman! Ay, I was a gentleman before I turned conspirator; for honest men are the gentlemen of Nature! Colonel, they tell me you rose from the ranks.

Damas. I did.

Mel. And in two years!

Damas. It is true; that's no wonder in our army present. Why the oldest general in the service is scarcely thirty, and we have some of two-and-twenty.

Mel. Two-and-twenty!

Damas. Yes; in the French army, now a days, promotion is not a matter of purchase. We are all heroes because we may be all generals. We have no fear of the cypress, because we may all hope for the laurel.

Mel. A general at two-and-twenty! [turning away]
— Sir, I may ask you a favour one of these days.

Damas. Sir, I shall be proud to grant it. It is astonishing how much I like a man after I've fought with him.

[Hides the sword.]

Enter MADAME DESCHAPPELLES and BEAUSEANT.

Mme. Deschap. Oh, prince, — prince! — What do I hear? You must fly — you must quit us!

Mel. I! —

Beau. Yes, prince: read this letter, just received from my friend at Paris, one of the Directory; they suspect you of designs against the Republic: they are very suspicious of princes, and your family take part with the Austrians. Knowing that I introduced your highness at Lyons, my friend writes to me to say that you must quit the town immediately, or you will be arrested, — thrown into prison, perhaps guillotined! Fly! — I will order horses to your carriage

instantly. Fly to Marseilles; there you can take ship to Leghorn.

Mme. Deschap. And what's to become of Pauline? Am I not to be mother to a princess, after all?

Enter PAULINE and MONSIEUR DESCHAPPELLES.

Pauline [throwing herself into MELNOTTE's arms]. You must leave us! — Leave Pauline!

Beau. Not a moment is to be wasted.

M. Deschap. I will go to the magistrates and inquire —

Beau. Then he is lost; the magistrates, hearing he is suspected, will order his arrest.

Mme. Deschap. And I shall not be a princess-dowager!

Beau. Why not? There is only one thing to be done: — send for the priest — let the marriage take place at once, and the prince carry home a bride?

Mel. Impossible! — [*Aside*]. Villain.

Mme. Deschap. What, lose my child?

Beau. And gain a princess!

Mme. Deschap. Oh, Monsieur Beaueseant, you are so very kind, it must be so, — we ought not to be selfish, my daughter's happiness is at stake. She will go away, too, in a carriage and six!

Pauline. Thou art here still, — I cannot part from thee, — my heart will break.

Mel. But thou wilt not consent to this hasty union? — thou wilt not wed an outcast — a fugitive?

Pauline. Ah! if thou art in danger, who should share it but Pauline?

Mel. [aside]. Distraction! — If the earth could swallow me!

M. Deschap. Gently! gently! The settlements — the contracts — my daughter's dowry!

Mel. The dowry! — I am not base enough for that; no, not one farthing!

Beau. [to MADAM]. Noble fellow! — Really your good husband is too mercantile in these matters. Monsieur Deschappelles, you hear his highness: we can arrange the settlements by proxy; 'tis the way with people of quality.

M. Deschap. But —

Mme. Deschap. Hold your tongue! — Don't expose yourself!

Beau. I will bring the priest in a trice. Go in all of you and prepare; the carriage shall be at the door before the ceremony is over.

Mme. Deschap. Be sure there are six horses, Beau-saint! You are very good to have forgiven us for refusing you; but you see — a prince!

Beau. And such a prince! Madame, I cannot blush at the success of so illustrious a rival. — [Aside.] Now will I follow them to the village, enjoy my triumph, and to-morrow, in the hour of thy shame and grief, I think, proud girl, thou wilt prefer even these arms to those of the gardener's son. [Exit.]

Mme. Deschap. Come, Monsieur Deschappelles, give your arm to her highness that is to be.

M. Deschap. I don't like doing business in such a hurry; 'tis not the way with the house of Deschappelles and Co.

Mme. Deschap. There, now, you fancy you are in the counting-house, don't you?

[*Pushes him to PAULINE.*

Mel. Stay, stay, Pauline — one word. Have you no scruple, no fear? Speak — it is not yet too late.

Pauline. When I loved thee, thy fate became mine. Triumph or danger — joy or sorrow — I am by thy side.

Damas. Well, well, prince, thou art a lucky man to be so loved. She is a good little girl in spite of her foibles — make her as happy as if she were not to be a princess [*slapping him on the shoulder*]. Come, sir, I wish you joy — young — tender — lovely; — zounds, I envy you!

Mel. [who has stood apart in gloomy abstraction]. Do you?*

* On the stage the following lines are added: —

"Do you? Wise judges are we of each other.
'Woo, wed, and bear her home!' So runs the bond
To which I sold myself, — and then — what then?
Away — I will not look beyond the hour.
Like children in the dark, I dare not face
The shades that gather round me in the distance.
You envy me — I thank you — you may read
My joy upon my brow — I thank you, sir!
If hearts had audible language, you would hear
What mine would answer when you talk of *envy*!"

ACT III. — SCENE I.

The exterior of the Golden Lion — time, twilight. The moon rises during the scene.

Enter Landlord and his Daughter from the Inn.

Land. Ha — ha — ha! Well, I never shall get over it. Our Claude is a prince with a vengeance now. His carriage breaks down at my inn — ha — ha!

Janet. And what airs the young lady gives herself! "Is this the best room you have, young woman?" with such a toss of the head.

Land. Well, get in, Janet: get in and see to the supper: the servants must sup before they go back.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter BEAUSEANT and GLAVIS.

Beau. You see our princess is lodged at last — one stage more, and she'll be at her journey's end — the beautiful palace at the foot of the Alps! — ha — ha!

Gla. Faith, I pity the poor Pauline — especially if she's going to sup at the Golden Lion [*makes a wry face*]. I shall never forget that cursed ragout.

Enter MELNOTTE from the Inn.

Beau. Your servant, my prince; you reigned most worthily. I condole with you on your abdication. I am afraid that your highness's retinue are not very faithful servants. I think they will quit you in the moment of your fall — 'tis the fate of greatness. But you are welcome to your fine clothes — also the diamond snuff-box, which Louis XIV. gave to your great-great-grandmother.

Gla. And the ring, with which your grandfather the Doge of Venice married the Adriatic.

Mel. I have kept my oath, gentlemen — say, have I kept my oath?

Beau. Most religiously.

Mel. Then you have done with me and mine — away with you!

Beau. How, knave?

Mel. Look you, our bond is over. Proud conquerors that we are, we have won the victory over a simple girl — compromised her honour — embittered her life — blasted, in their very blossoms, all the flowers of her youth. This is your triumph, — it is my shame! [Turns to BEAUSEANT.] Enjoy thy triumph, but not in my sight. I was her betrayer — I am her protector! Cross but her path — one word of scorn, one look of insult — nay, but one quiver of that mocking lip, and I will teach thee that bitter word thou hast graven eternally in this heart — *Repentance!*

Beau. His highness is most grandiloquent.

Mel. Highness me no more! Beware! Remorse has made me a new being. Away with you! There is danger in me. Away!

Gla. [aside]. He's an awkward fellow to deal with: come away, Beauseant.

Beau. I know the respect due to rank. Adieu, my prince. Any commands at Lyons? Yet hold — I promised you 200 louis on your wedding-day; here they are.

Mel. [dashing the purse to the ground]. I gave you revenge, I did not sell it. Take up your silver, Judas; take it. — Ay, it is fit you should learn to stoop.

Beau. You will beg my pardon for this some day. *[Aside to GLAVIS.]* Come to my château — I shall return hither to-morrow, to learn how Pauline likes her new dignity.

Mel. Are you not gone yet?

Beau. Your highness's most obedient, most faithful —

Gla. And most humble servants. Ha! ha!

[*Exeunt BEAUSEANT and GLAVIS.*]

Mel. Thank heaven I had no weapon, or I should have slain them. Wretch! what can I say? Where turn? On all sides mockery — the very boors within — *[Laughter from the Inn].* — 'Sdeath, if even in this short absence the exposure should have chanced. I will call her. We will go hence. I have already sent one I can trust to my mother's house. There, at least, none can insult her agony — gloat upon her shame!

There alone must she learn what a villain she has sworn to love.

[As he turns to the door enter PAULINE from the inn.

Pauline. Ah! my lord, what a place! I never saw such rude people. They stare and wink so. I think the very sight of a prince, though he travels *incognito*, turns their honest heads. What a pity the carriage should break down in such a spot! You are not well — the drops stand on your brow — your hand is feverish.

Mel. Nay, it is but a passing spasm; the air —

Pauline. Is not the soft air of your native south — How pale he is! — indeed thou art not well. Where are our people? I will call them.

Mel. Hold!

I — I am well.

Pauline. Thou art! — Ah! now I know it. Thou fanciest, my kind lord — I know thou dost — Thou fanciest these rude walls, these rustic gossips, Brick'd floors, sour wine, coarse viands, vex Pauline; And so they might, but thou art by my side, And I forget all else.

Enter Landlord, the Servants peeping and laughing over his shoulder.

Land. My lord — your highness — Will your most noble excellency choose —

Mel. Begone, sir! [Exit Landlord laughing.

Pauline. How could they have learn'd thy name!
One's servants are so vain! — nay, let it not
Chafe thee, sweet prince! — a few short days and we
Shall see thy palace by its lake of silver,
And — nay, nay, spendthrift, is thy wealth of smile?
Already drain'd, or dost thou play the miser?

Mel. Thine eyes would call up smiles in deserted
fair one.

Let us escape these rustics: close at hand
There is a cot, where I have bid prepare
Our evening lodgment — a rude, homely roof,
But honest, where our welcome will not be
Made torture by the vulgar eyes and tongues
That are as death to Love! A heavenly night!
The wooing air and the soft moon invite us.
Wilt walk? I pray thee, now, — I know the path,
Ay, every inch of it!

Pauline. What, thou! methought
Thou wert a stranger in these parts? Ah, truant,
Some village beauty lured thee; — thou art now
Grown constant?

Mel. Trust me.

Pauline. Princes are so changeful

Mel. Come, dearest, come.

Pauline. Shall I not call our people
To light us?

Mel. Heaven will lend its stars for torches!
It is not far.

Pauline. The night breeze chills me.

Mel.

Nay,

Let me thus mantle thee; — it is not cold.

Pauline. Never beneath thy smile!*Mel.* [aside].

O Heaven! forgive me!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

MELNOTTE's cottage — Widow bustling about — a table spread for supper.

Widow. So, I think that looks very neat. He sent me a line, so blotted that I can scarcely read it, to say he would be here almost immediately. She must have loved him well indeed to have forgotten his birth; for though he was introduced to her in disguise, he is too honourable not to have revealed to her the artifice, which her love only could forgive. Well, I do not wonder at it; for though my son is not a prince, he ought to be one, and that's almost as good. [Knock at the door.] Ah! here they are.

Enter MELNOTTE and PAULINE.

Widow. Oh, my boy — the pride of my heart! — welcome, welcome! I beg pardon, ma'am, but I do love him so!

Pauline. Good woman, I really — why prince, what is this? — does the old lady know you? Oh, I guess, you have done her some service. Another proof of your kind heart; is it not?

Mel. Of my kind heart, ay!

Pauline. So you know the prince?

Widow. Know him, madam? — Ah, I begin to fear it is you who know him not!

Pauline. Do you think she is mad? Can we stay here, my lord? I think there's something very wild about her.

Mel. Madam, I — no, I cannot tell her; my knees knock together: what a coward is a man who has lost his honour! Speak to her — speak to her [*to his mother*] — tell her that — O Heaven, that I were dead!

Pauline. How confused he looks! — this strange place! — this woman — what can it mean? — I half suspect — Who are you, madam! — who are you? can't you speak? are you struck dumb?

Widow. Claude, you have not deceived her? — Ah, shame upon you! I thought that, before you went to the altar, she was to have known all.

Pauline. All! what! — My blood freezes in my veins!

Widow. Poor lady! — dare I tell her, Claude? [*MELNOTTE makes a sign of assent.*] Know you not then, madam, that this young man is of poor though honest parents? Know you not that you are wedded to my son, Claude Melnotte?

Pauline. Your son! hold — hold! do not speak to me. — [Approaches MELNOTTE, and lays her hand on his arm. Is this a jest? is it? I know it is, only speak — one word — one look — one smile. I cannot believe

— I who loved thee so — I cannot believe that thou art such a — No, I will not wrong thee by a harsh word — Speak!

Mel. Leave us — have pity on her, on me: leave us.

Widow. Oh, Claude, that I should live to see thee bowed by shame! thee of whom I was so proud!

[*Exit by the staircase.*

Pauline. Her son — her son!

Mel. Now, lady, hear me.

Pauline. Hear thee!

Ay, speak — her son! have fiends a parent? speak, That thou mayst silence curses — speak!

Mel. No, curse me:

Thy curse would blast me less than thy forgiveness.

Pauline [*laughing wildly*]. "This is thy palace, where the perfumed light

Steals through the mist of alabaster lamps,
And every air is heavy with the sighs

Of orange-groves, and music from sweet lutes,
And murmurs of low fountains, that gush forth
I' the midst of roses!" Dost thou like the picture?

This is my bridal home, and *thou* my bridegroom.

O fool — O dupe — O wretch! — I see it all —

The by-word and the jeer of every tongue

In Lyons. Hast thou in thy heart one touch

Of human kindness? if thou hast, why, kill me,

And save thy wife from madness. No, it cannot —

It cannot be: this is some horrid dream:

I shall wake soon. — [Touching him.] Art flesh? art man? or but

The shadows seen in sleep? It is too real.
What have I done to thee? how sinn'd against thee,
That thou shouldst crush me thus?

Levels all ranks, and lays the shepherd's crook
Beside the sceptre. Thus I made my home
In the soft palace of a fairy Future!
My father died; and I, the peasant-born,
Was my own lord. Then did I seek to rise

Out of the prison of my mean estate;
And, with such jewels as the exploring mind
Brings from the caves of knowledge, buy my ransom
From those twin gaolers of the daring heart —
Low birth and iron fortune. Thy bright image
Glass'd in my soul, took all the hues of glory,
And lured me on to those inspiring toils
By which man masters men! For thee I grew
A midnight student o'er the dreams of sages.
For thee I sought to borrow from each grace,
And every muse, such attributes as lend
Ideal charms to love. I thought of thee,
And passion taught me poesy — of thee,
And on the painter's canvas grew the life
Of beauty! Art became the shadow
Of the dear starlight of thy haunting eyes!
Men call'd me vain — some mad — I heeded not;
But still toil'd on — hoped on — for it was sweet,
If not to win, to feel more worthy thee?

Pauline. Has he a magic to exorcise hate!

Mel. At last, in one mad hour, I dared to pour
The thoughts that burst their channels into song,
And sent them to thee — such a tribute, lady,
As beauty rarely scorns, even from the meanest.
The name — appended by the burning heart
That long'd to show its idol what bright things
It had created — yea, the enthusiast's name,
That should have been thy triumph, was thy scorn!
That very hour — when passion, turn'd to wrath,
Resembled hatred most — when thy disdain

Made my whole soul a chaos — in that hour
The tempters found me a revengeful tool
For their revenge! Thou hadst trampled on the
worm —
It turn'd and stung thee!

Pauline. Love, sir, hath no sting.
What was the slight of a poor powerless girl
To the deep wrong of this most vile revenge?
Oh, how I loved this man! — a serf! — a slave!

Mel. Hold, lady! No, not slave! Despair is free!
I will not tell thee of the throes — the struggles —
The anguish — the remorse! No, let it pass!
And let me come to such most poor atonement
Yet in my power. *Pauline!* —

[Approaching her with great emotion, and about to take
her hand.

Pauline. No, touch me not!
I know my fate. You are, by law, my tyrant;
And I — O Heaven! a peasant's wife! I'll work —
Toil — drudge — do what thou wilt — but touch me
not;
Let my wrongs make me sacred!

Mel. Do not fear me.
Thou dost not know me, madam: at the altar
My vengeance ceased — my guilty oath expired!
Henceforth, no image of some marble saint,
Niched in cathedral aisles, is hallow'd more
From the rude hand of sacrilegious wrong.
I am thy husband — nay, thou need'st not shudder; —

Here, at thy feet, I lay a husband's rights.
A marriage thus unholy — unfulfill'd —
A bond of fraud — is, by the laws of France,
Made void and null. To-night sleep — sleep in peace.
To-morrow, pure and virgin as this morn
I bore thee, bathed in blushes, from the shrine,
Thy father's arms shall take thee to thy home.
The law shall do thee justice, and restore
Thy right to bless another with thy love.
And when thou art happy, and hast half forgot
Him who so loved — so wrong'd thee, think at least
Heaven left some remnant of the angel still
In that poor peasant's nature!

Ho! my mother!

Enter Widow.

Conduct this lady — (she is not my wife;
She is our guest, — our honour'd guest, my mother) —
To the poor chamber, where the sleep of virtue,
Never, beneath my father's honest roof,
Ev'n villains dared to mar! Now, lady, now,
I think thou wilt believe me. Go, my mother!

Widow. She is not thy wife!

Mel. Hush, hush! for mercy's
sake!

Speak not, but go.

[*Widow ascends the stairs; PAULINE follows weeping — turns to look back.*

Mel. [sinking down]. All angels bless and guard her!

ACT IV. — SCENE I.

The cottage as before — MELNOTTE seated before a table — writing implements, &c. — (Day breaking.)

Mel. Hush, hush! — she sleeps at last! — thank Heaven, for a while she forgets even that I live! Her sobs, which have gone to my heart the whole, long, desolate night, have ceased! — all calm — all still! I will go now; I will send this letter to Pauline's father: when he arrives, I will place in his hands my own consent to the divorce, and then, O France! my country! accept among thy protectors, thy defenders — the Peasant's Son! Our country is less proud than custom, and does not refuse the blood, the heart, the right hand of the poor man.

Enter Widow.

Widow. My son, thou hast acted ill; but sin brings its own punishment. In the hour of thy remorse, it is not for a mother to reproach thee.

Mel. What is past is past. There is a future left to all men, who have the virtue to repent, and the energy to atone. Thou shalt be proud of thy son yet. Meanwhile, remember this poor lady has been grie-

vously injured. For the sake of thy son's conscience, respect, honour, bear with her. If she weep, console — if she chide, be silent. 'Tis but a little while more — I shall send an express fast as horse can speed to her father. Farewell! I shall return shortly.

Widow. It is the only course left to thee — thou wert led astray, but thou art not hardened. Thy heart is right still, as ever it was when, in thy most ambitious hopes, thou wert never ashamed of thy poor mother.

Mel. Ashamed of thee! No, if I yet endure, yet live, yet hope — it is only because I would not die till I have redeemed the noble heritage I have lost — the heritage I took unstained from thee and my dead father — a proud conscience and an honest name. I shall win them back yet — Heaven bless you! [Exit.

Widow. My dear Claude! How my heart bleeds for him.

[PAULINE looks down from above, and after a pause descends.

Pauline. Not here! — he spares me that pain at least: so far he is considerate — yet the place seems still more desolate without him. Oh, that I could hate him — the gardener's son! — and yet how nobly he — no — no — no, I will not be so mean a thing as to forgive him!

Widow. Good morning, madam; I would have waited on you if I had known you were stirring.

Pauline. It is no matter, ma'am — your son's wife ought to wait on herself.

Widow. My son's wife — let not that thought vex you, madam — he tells me that you will have your divorce. And I hope I shall live to see him smile again. There are maidens in this village, young and fair, madam, who may yet console him.

Pauline. I dare say — they are very welcome — and when the divorce is got — he will marry again I am sure I hope so. [Weeps.]

Widow. He could have married the richest girl in the province, if he had pleased it; but his head was turned, poor child! he could think of nothing but you

[Weeps.]

Pauline. Don't weep, mother.

Widow. Ah, he has behaved very ill, I know, but love is so headstrong in the young. Don't weep, madam.

Pauline. So, as you were saying — go on.

Widow. Oh, I cannot excuse him, ma'am — he was not in his right senses.

Pauline. But he always — always [sobbing] loved — loved me then?

Widow. He thought of nothing else. See here — he learnt to paint that he might take your likeness [uncovers the picture]. But that's all over now — I trust you have cured him of his folly; — but, dear heart, you have had no breakfast!

Pauline. I can't take anything — don't trouble yourself.

Widow. Nay, madam, be persuaded; a little coffee will refresh you. Our milk and eggs are excellent. I

will get out Claude's coffee-cup — it is of real Sèvres; he saved up all his money to buy it three years ago, because the name of *Pauline* was inscribed on it.

Pauline. Three years ago! Poor Claude! — Thank you; I think I will have some coffee. Oh! if he were but a poor gentleman, even a merchant: but a gardener's son — and what a home! — Oh no, it is too dreadful!

[*They seat themselves at the table, BEAUSEANT opens the lattice and looks in.*

Beau. So — so — the coast is clear! I saw Claude in the lane — I shall have an excellent opportunity.

[*Shuts the lattice and knocks at the door.*

Pauline [starting]. Can it be my father? — he has not sent for him yet? No, he cannot be in such a hurry to get rid of me.

Widow. It is not time for your father to arrive yet; it must be some neighbour.

Pauline. Don't admit any one.

[*Widow opens the door, BEAUSEANT pushes her aside and enters.*

Ha! Heavens! that hateful Beauseant! This is indeed bitter!

Beau. Good morning, madam! O widow, your son begs you will have the goodness to go to him in the village — he wants to speak to you on particular business; you'll find him at the inn, or the grocer's shop, or the baker's, or at some other friend's of your family — make haste.

Pauline. Don't leave me, mother! — don't leave me.
Beau. [with great respect]. Be not alarmed, madam.
Believe me your friend — your servant.

Pauline. Sir, I have no fear of you, even in this house! Go, madam, if your son wishes it; I will not contradict his commands whilst, at least, he has still the right to be obeyed.

Widow. I don't understand this; however, I shan't be long gone. [Exit.]

Pauline. Sir, I divine the object of your visit — you wish to exult in the humiliation of one who humbled you. Be it so; I am prepared to endure all — even your presence!

Beau. You mistake me, madam — Pauline, you mistake me! I come to lay my fortune at your feet. You must already be disenchanted with this impostor; these walls are not worthy to be hallowed by your beauty! Shall that form be clasped in the arms of a base-born peasant? Beloved, beautiful Pauline! fly with me — my carriage waits without — I will bear you to a home more meet for your reception. Wealth, luxury, station — all shall yet be yours. I forget your past disdain — I remember only your beauty and my unconquerable love!

Pauline. Sir! leave this house — it is humble; but a husband's roof, however lowly, is, in the eyes of God and man, the temple of a wife's honour! Know that I would rather starve — yes — with him who has betrayed me, than accept your lawful hand, even were you the prince whose name he bore! — Go.

Beau. What, is not your pride humbled yet?

Pauline. Sir, what was pride in prosperity in affliction becomes virtue.

Beau. Look round: these rugged floors — these homely walls — this wretched struggle of poverty for comfort — think of this! and contrast with such a picture the refinement, the luxury, the pomp, that the wealthiest gentleman of Lyons offers to the loveliest lady. Ah, hear me!

Pauline. Oh! my father! — why did I leave you? — why am I thus friendless? Sir, you see before you a betrayed, injured, miserable woman! — respect her anguish!

[MELNOTTE opens the door silently, and pauses at the threshold.

Beau. No! let me rather thus console it; let me snatch from those lips one breath of that fragrance which never should be wasted on the low churl thy husband.

Pauline. Help! Claude! — Claude! — Have I no protector?

Beau. Be silent! [showing a pistol.] See, I do not come unprepared even for violence. I will brave all things — thy husband and all his race — for thy sake. Thus, then, I clasp thee!

Mel. [dashing him to the other end of the stage]. Pauline — look up, Pauline! thou art safe.

Beau. [levelling his pistol]. Dare you thus insult a man of my birth, ruffian?

Pauline. Oh, spare him — spare my husband! — Beaueseant — Claude — no — no [*faints*].

Mel. Miserable trickster! shame upon you! brave devices to terrify a woman! Coward! — you tremble — you have outraged the laws — you know that your weapon is harmless — you have the courage of the mountebank, not the bravo! — Pauline, there is no danger.

Beau. I wish thou wert a gentleman — as it is, thou art beneath me. — Good day, and a happy honeymoon. — [*Aside.*] I will not die till I am avenged. [*Exit.*]

Mel. I hold her in these arms — the last embrace! Never, ah never more, shall this dear head Be pillow'd on the heart that should have shelter'd And has betray'd! — Soft — soft! one kiss — poor wretch!

No scorn on that pale lip forbids me now!
One kiss — so ends all record of my crime!
It is the seal upon the tomb of hope,
By which, like some lost, sorrowing angel, sits
Sad memory evermore; — she breathes — she moves —
She wakes to scorn, to hate, but not to shudder
Beneath the touch of my abhorred love.

[Places her on a seat.]

There — we are strangers now!

Pauline. All gone — all calm —
Is *every* thing a dream? thou art safe, unhurt —
I do not love thee; but — but I am woman,
And — and — no blood is spilt?

Mel. No, lady, no;
My guilt hath not deserved so rich a blessing
As even danger in thy cause.

Enter WIDOW.

Widow. My son, I have been everywhere in search of you; why did you send for me?

Mel. I did not send for you.

Widow. No! but I must tell you your express has returned.

Mel. So soon! impossible!

Widow. Yes, he met the lady's father and mother on the road; they were going into the country on a visit. Your messenger says that Monsieur Deschappelles turned almost white with anger when he read your letter. They will be here almost immediately. Oh, Claude, Claude! what will they do to you? How I tremble! Ah, madam! do not let them injure him — if you knew how he doated on you.

Pauline. Injure him! no, ma'am, be not afraid; — my father! how shall I meet him? how go back to Lyons? the scoff of the whole city! Cruel, cruel, Claude [*in great agitation*]. Sir, you have acted most treacherously.

Mel. I know it, madam.

Pauline [aside]. If he would but ask me to forgive him! — I never can forgive you, sir.

Mel. I never dared to hope it.

Pauline. But you are my husband now, and I have sworn to — to love you, sir.

Mel. That was under a false belief, madam; Heaven and the laws will release you from your vow.

Pauline. He will drive me mad! if he were but less

proud — if he would but ask me to remain — hark, hark — I hear the wheels of the carriage — Sir — Claude, they are coming; have you no word to say ere it is too late? Quick — speak.

Mel. I can only congratulate you on your release.
Behold your parents!

Enter Monsieur and Madame Deschappelles and Colonel Damas.

M. Deschap. My child! my child!

Mme. Deschap. Oh, my poor Pauline! — what a villainous hovel this is! Old woman, get me a chair — I shall faint — I certainly shall. What will the world say? Child, you have been a fool. A mother's heart is easily broken.

Damas. Ha, ha! most noble Prince — I am sorry to see a man of your quality in such a condition; I am afraid your highness will go to the House of Correction.

Mel. Taunt on, sir; I spared *you* when you were unarmed — I am unarmed now. A man who has no excuse for crime is indeed defenceless!

Damas. There's something fine in the rascal, after all!

M. Deschap. Where is the impostor? — Are you thus shameless, traitor? Can you brave the presence of that girl's father?

Mel. Strike me, if it please you — you *are* her father.

Pauline. Sir — sir, for my sake; — whatever his guilt, he has acted nobly in atonement.

Mme. Deschap. Nobly! Are you mad, girl? I have no patience with you — to disgrace all your family thus! — Nobly! Oh you abominable, hardened, pitiful, mean, ugly villain!

Damas. Ugly! Why he was beautiful yesterday!

Pauline. Madame, this is his roof, and he is my husband. Respect your daughter, or let blame fall alone on her.

Mme. Deschap. You — you — Oh, I'm choking.

M. Deschap. Sir, it were idle to waste reproach upon a conscience like yours — you renounce all pretensions to the person of this lady?

Mel. I do. [Gives a paper.] Here is my consent to a divorce — my full confession of the fraud which annuls the marriage. Your daughter has been foully wronged — I grant it, sir; but her own lips will tell you that, from the hour in which she crossed this threshold, I returned to my own station, and respected hers. Pure and inviolate, as when yestermorn you laid your hand upon her head, and blessed her, I yield her back to you. For myself — I deliver you for ever from my presence. An outcast and a criminal, I seek some distant land, where I may mourn my sin, and pray for your daughter's peace. Farewell — farewell to you all, for ever!

Widow. Claude, Claude, you will not leave your poor old mother? *She* does not disown you in your sorrow — no, not even in your guilt. No divorce can separate a mother from her son.

Pauline. This poor widow teaches me my duty. No, mother, — no, for you are now *my* mother also! — nor should any law, human or divine, separate the wife from her husband's sorrows. Claude — Claude — all is forgotten — forgiven — I am thine for ever!

Mme. Deschap. What do I hear? — Come away, or never see my face again.

M. Deschap. Pauline, *we* never betrayed you! — do you forsake us for him?

Pauline [going back to her father]. Oh no — but you will forgive him too; we will live together — he shall be your son.

M. Deschap. Never! Cling to him and forsake your parents! His home shall be yours — his fortune yours — his fate yours: the wealth I have acquired by honest industry shall never enrich the dishonest man.

Pauline. And you would have a wife enjoy luxury while a husband toils! Claude, take me; thou canst not give me wealth, titles, station — but thou canst give me a true heart. I will work for thee, tend thee, bear with thee, and never, never shall these lips reproach thee for the past.

Damas. I'll be hanged if I am not going to blubber!

Mel. This is the heaviest blow of all! — What a heart I have wronged! — Do not fear me, sir; I am not all hardened — I will not rob her of a holier love than mine. Pauline! — angel of love and mercy! — your memory shall lead me back to virtue! — The husband of a being so beautiful in her noble and sub-

lime tenderness may be poor — may be low-born; — (there is no guilt in the decrees of providence!) — but he should be one who can look thee in the face without a blush, — to whom thy love does not bring remorse, — who can fold thee to his heart, and say, — “*Here there is no deceit!*” — I am not that man!

Damas [aside to MELNOTTE]. Thou art a noble fellow, notwithstanding; and wouldest make an excellent soldier. Serve in my regiment. I have had a letter from the Directory — our young general takes the command of the army in Italy, — I am to join him at Marseilles, — I will depart this day, if thou wilt go with me.

Mel. It is the favour I would have asked thee, if I dared. Place me wherever a foe is most dreaded, — wherever France most needs a life!

Damas. There shall not be a forlorn hope without thee!

Mel. There is my hand! — mother, your blessing. I shall see you again, — a better man than a prince, — a man who has bought the right to high thoughts by brave deeds. And thou! — thou! so wildly worshipped, so guiltily betrayed, — all is not yet lost! — for thy memory, at least, must be mine till death! If I live, the name of him thou hast once loved shall not rest dishonoured; — if I fall, amidst the carnage and the roar of battle, my soul will fly back to thee, and love shall share with death my last sigh! — More —

more would I speak to thee! — to pray! — to bless! But no; — When I am less unworthy I will utter it to Heaven! — I cannot trust myself to — [turning to DESCHAPPELLES.] Your pardon, sir; — they are my last words — Farewell! [Exit.]

Damas. I will go after him. — France will thank me for this. [Exit.]

Pauline [starting from her father's arms]. Claude! — Claude! — my husband!

M. Deschap. You have a father still!

ACT V.

Two years and a half from the date of Act IV.

SCENE I.

The Streets of Lyons.

Enter First, Second, and Third Officers.

First Officer. Well, here we are at Lyons, with gallant old Damas: it is his native place.

Second Officer. Yes; he has gained a step in the army since he was here last. The Lyonnese ought to be very proud of stout General Damas.

Third Officer. Promotion is quick in the French army. This mysterious Morier, — the hero of Lodi, and the favourite of the commander-in-chief, — has risen to a colonel's rank in two years and a half.

Enter DAMAS, as a General.

Damas. Good morrow, gentlemen; I hope you will amuse yourselves during our short stay at Lyons. It is a fine city: improved since I left it. Ah! it is a pleasure to grow old, — when the years that bring decay to ourselves do but ripen the prosperity of our country. You have not met with Morier?

First Officer. No: we were just speaking of him.

Second Officer. Pray, general, can you tell us wh—
this Morier really is?

Damas. Is! — why a colonel in the French army —

Third Officer. True. But what was he at first?

Damas. At first? Why a baby in long clothes, —
suppose.

First Officer. Ha, ha! Ever facetious, general.

Second Officer [to Third.] The general is sore upon
this point; you will only chafe him. — Any commands —
general?

Damas. None. Good day to you.

[*Exeunt Second and Third Officers* — .

Damas. Our comrades are very inquisitive. Poor
Morier is the subject of a vast deal of curiosity.

First Officer. Say interest, rather, general. His
constant melancholy, the loneliness of his habits, —
his daring valour, his brilliant rise in the profession —
— your friendship, and the favours of the commander
in-chief, — all tend to make him as much the matter
of gossip as of admiration. But where is he, general?
I have missed him all the morning.

Damas. Why, captain, I'll let you into a secret.
My young friend has come with me to Lyons in hope
of finding a miracle.

First Officer. A miracle!

Damas. Yes, a miracle! in other words, — a con-
stant woman.

First Officer. Oh! an affair of love!

Damas. Exactly so. No sooner did he enter Lyons than he waved his hand to me, threw himself from his horse, and is now, I warrant, asking every one who can know anything about the matter, whether a certain lady is still true to a certain gentleman!

First Officer. Success to him! — and of that success there can be no doubt. The gallant Colonel Morier, the hero of Lodi, might make his choice out of the proudest families in France.

Damas. Oh, if pride be a recommendation, the lady and her mother are most handsomely endowed. By the way, captain, if you should chance to meet with Morier, tell him he will find me at the hotel.

First Officer. I will, general. [Exit.

Damas. Now will I go to the Deschappelles, and make a report to my young Colonel. Ha! by Mars, Bacchus, Apollo, Virorum, — here comes Monsieur Beauseant!

Enter BEAUSEANT.

Good morrow, Monsieur Beauseant! How fares it with you?

Beau. [aside]. Damas! that is unfortunate; — if the Italian campaign should have filled his pockets, he may seek to baffle me in the moment of my victory. [Aloud.] Your servant, general, — for such, I think, is your new distinction! Just arrived in Lyons?

Damas. Not an hour ago. Well, how go on the Deschappelles? Have they forgiven you in that affair of young Melnotte? You had some hand in that notable device, — eh?

Beau. Why, less than you think for! The fellow imposed upon me. I have set it all right now. What has become of him? He could not have joined the army, after all. There is no such name in the books.

Damas. I know nothing about Melnotte. As you say, I never heard the name in the Grand Army.

Beau. Hem! — You are not married, general?

Damas. Do I look like a married man, sir? — No, thank Heaven! My profession is to make widows, not wives.

Beau. You must have gained much booty in Italy! Pauline will be your heiress — eh?

Damas. Booty! Not I! Heiress to what? Two trunks and a portmanteau, — four horses, — three swords, — two suits of regiments, and six pair of white leather inexpressibles! A pretty fortune for a young lady!

Beau. [aside]. Then all is safe! *[Aloud.]* Ha! ha! Is that really all your capital, General Damas? Why, I thought Italy had been a second Mexico to you soldiers.

Damas. All a toss-up, sir. I was not one of the lucky ones! My friend Morier, indeed, saved something handsome. But our commander-in-chief took care of him, and Morier is a thrifty, economical dog, — not like the rest of us soldiers, who spend our money as carelessly as if it were our blood.

Beau. Well, it is no matter! I do not want fortune with Pauline. And you must know, General Damas,

that your fair cousin has at length consented to reward my long and ardent attachment.

Damas. You! — the devil! Why, she is already married! There is no divorce!

Beau. True; but this very day she is formally to authorize the necessary proceedings, — this very day she is to sign the contract that is to make her mine within one week from the day on which her present illegal marriage is annulled.

Damas. You tell me wonders! — Wonders! No; I believe anything of women!

Beau. I must wish you good morning.

[*As he is going, enter DESCHAPPELLES.*

M. Deschap. Oh, Beauseant! well met. Let us come to the notary at once.

Damas [to Deschap]. Why, cousin!

M. Deschap. Damas, welcome to Lyons. Pray call on us; my wife will be delighted to see you.

Damas. Your wife be — blessed for her condescension! But [*taking him aside*] what do I hear? Is it possible that your daughter has consented to a divorce? — that she will marry Monsieur Beauseant?

M. Deschap. Certainly! What have you to say against it! A gentleman of birth, fortune, character. We are not so proud as we were; even my wife has had enough of nobility and princes!

Damas. But Pauline loved that young man so tenderly!

M. Deschap. [taking snuff]. That was two years and a half ago!

Damas. Very true. Poor Melnotte!

M. Deschap. But do not talk of that impostor; I hope he is dead or has left the country. Nay, even were he in Lyons at this moment, he ought to rejoice that, in an honourable and suitable alliance, my daughter may forget her sufferings and his crime.

Damas. Nay, if it be all settled, I have no more to say. Monsieur Beauseant informs me that the contract is to be signed this very day.

M. Deschap. It is; at one o'clock precisely. Will you be one of the witnesses?

Damas. I? — No; that is to say — yes, certainly! — at one o'clock I will wait on you.

M. Deschap. Till then, adieu — come Beauseant.

[*Exeunt BEAUSEANT and DESCHAPPELLES.*]

Damas. The man who sets his heart upon a woman Is a chameleon, and doth feed on air;
From air he takes his colours — holds his life, —
Changes with every wind, — grows lean or fat,
Rosy with hope, or green with jealousy,
Or pallid with despair — just as the gale
Varies from north to south — from heat to cold!
Oh, woman! woman! thou shouldst have few sins
Of thine own to answer for! Thou art the author
Of such a book of follies in a man,
That it would need the tears of all the angels
To blot the record out!

Enter MELNOTTE, pale and agitated.

I need not tell thee! Thou hast heard —

Mel. The worst!

I have!

Damas. Be cheer'd; others are fair as she is!

Mel. Others! — The world is crumbled at my feet!
She was my world; fill'd up the whole of being —
Smiled in the sunshine — walk'd the glorious earth —
Sate in my heart — was the sweet life of life.
The Past was hers; I dreamt not of a Future
That did not wear her shape! Mem'ry and Hope
Alike are gone. Pauline is faithless! Henceforth
The universal space is desolate!

Damas. Hope yet.

Mel. Hope, yes! — one hope is left me still —
A soldier's grave! Glory has died with love.
I look into my heart, and, where I saw
Pauline, see Death!

[*After a pause*]. — But am I not deceived?
I went but by the rumour of the town;
Rumour is false, — I was too hasty! Damas,
Whom hast thou seen?

Damas. Thy rival and her father.

Arm thyself for the truth. — He heeds not —

Mel. She

Will never know how deeply she was loved!
The charitable night, that wont to bring
Comfort to day, in bright and eloquent dreams,
Is henceforth leagued with misery! Sleep, farewell,

Or else become eternal! Oh, the waking
From false oblivion, and to see the sun,
And know she is another's! —

Damas.

Be a man!

Mel. I am a man! — it is the sting of woe
Like mine that tells us we are men!

Damas.
Did not deserve thee.

Mel. Hush! — No word against her!
Why should she keep, through years and silent absence,
The holy tablets of her virgin faith
True to a traitor's name! Oh, blame her not;
It were a sharper grief to think her worthless
Than to be what I am! To-day, — to-day!
They said "To-day!" This day, so wildly welcomed —
This day, my soul had singled out of time
And mark'd for bliss! This day! oh, could I see her,
See her once more unknown; but hear her voice.
So that one echo of its music might
Make ruin less appalling in its silence.

Damas. Easily done! Come with me to her house;
Your dress — your cloak — moustache — the bronzed
hues
Of time and toil — the name you bear — belief
In your absence, all will ward away suspicion.
Keep in the shade. Ay, I would have you come.
There may be hope! Pauline is yet so young,
They may have forced her to these second bridals
Out of mistaken love.

Mel.

No, bid me hope not!

Bid me not hope! I could not bear again
To fall from such a heaven! One gleam of sunshine,
And the ice breaks and I am lost! Oh, Damas,
There's no such thing as courage in a man;
The veriest slave that ever crawl'd from danger
Might spurn me now. When first I lost her, Damas,
I bore it, did I not? I still had hope,
And now I — I — [Bursts into an agony of grief.
Damas. What, comrade! all the women
That ever smiled destruction on brave hearts
Were not worth tears like these!

Mel. 'Tis past — forget it.
I am prepared; life has no further ills!
The cloud has broken in that stormy rain,
And on the waste I stand, alone with Heaven.

Damas. His very face is changed; a breaking heart
Does its work soon! — Come, Melnotte, rouse thyself:
One effort more. Again thou'l see her.

Mel. See her!
There is a passion in that simple sentence
That shivers all the pride and power of reason
Into a chaos!

Damas. Time wanes; — come, ere yet
It be too late.

Mel. Terrible words — “*Too late!*”
Lead on. One last look more, and then —

Damas. Forget her!

Mel. Forget her! yea. — For death remembers not.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A room in the house of MONSIEUR DESCHAPPELLES; PAULINE seated in great dejection.

Pauline. It is so, then. I must be false to Love,
Or sacrifice a father! Oh, my Claude,
My lover, and my husband! Have I lived
To pray that thou mayst find some fairer boon
Than the deep faith of this devoted heart, —
Nourish'd till now — now broken?

Enter MONSIEUR DESCHAPPELLES.

M. Deschap. My dear child,
How shall I thank — how bless thee? Thou hast
saved,
I will not say my fortune — I could bear
Reverse, and shrink not — but that prouder wealth
Which merchants value most — my name, my credit —
The hard-won honours of a toilsome life: —
These thou hast saved, my child!

Pauline. Is there no hope?
No hope but this?

M. Deschap. None. If, without the sum
Which Beauseant offers for thy hand, this day
Sinks to the west — to-morrow brings our ruin!
And hundreds, mingled in that ruin, curse
The bankrupt merchant! and the insolvent herd

We feasted and made merry cry in scorn,
"How pride has fallen! — Lo, the bankrupt merchant!"
My daughter, thou hast saved us!

Pauline. And am lost!

M. Deschap. Come, let me hope that Beaueseant's
love —

Pauline. His love!

Talk not of love. Love has no thought of self!
Love buys not with the ruthless usurer's gold
The loathsome prostitution of a hand
Without a heart? Love sacrifices all things
To bless the thing it loves! *He* knows not love.
Father, his love is hate — his hope revenge!
My tears, my anguish, my remorse for falsehood —
These are the joys that he wrings from our despair!

M. Deschap. If thou deem'st thus, reject him! Shame
and ruin

Were better than thy misery; — think no more on't.
My sand is wellnigh run — what boots it when
The glass is broken? We'll annul the contract:
And if to-morrow in the prisoner's cell
These aged limbs are laid, why still, my child,
I'll think thou art spared; and wait the Liberal Hour
That lays the beggar by the side of kings!

Pauline. No — no — forgive me! You, my honour'd
father, —

You, who so loved, so cherish'd me, whose lips
Never knew one harsh word! I'm not ungrateful;
I am but human! — hush! Now, call the bride-
groom —

You see I am prepared — no tears — all calm;
But, father, *talk no more of love!*

M. Deschap. My child,
'Tis but one struggle; he is young, rich, noble;
Thy state will rank first 'mid the dames of Lyons;
And when this heart can shelter thee no more,
Thy youth will not be guardianless.

Pauline. I have set
My foot upon the ploughshare — I will pass
The fiery ordeal. [Aside.] Merciful Heaven, support
me!
And on the absent wanderer shed the light
Of happier stars — lost evermore to me?

Enter MADAME DESCHAPPELLES, BEAUSEANT, GLAVIS,
and Notary.

Mme. Deschap. Why, Pauline, you are quite in *déshabille* — you ought to be more alive to the importance of this joyful occasion. We had once looked higher, it is true; but you see, after all, Monsieur Beauseant's father *was* a Marquis, and that's a great comfort. Pedigree and jointure! — you have them both in Monsieur Beauseant. A young lady decorously brought up should only have two considerations in her choice of a husband: first, is his birth honourable? secondly, will his death be advantageous? All other trifling details should be left to parental anxiety.

Beau. [approaching and waving aside Madame]. Ah,

Pauline! let me hope that you are reconciled to an event which confers such rapture upon me.

Pauline. I am reconciled to my doom.

Beau. Doom is a harsh word, sweet lady.

Pauline [aside]. This man must have some mercy — his heart cannot be marble. *[Aloud.]* Oh, sir, be just — be generous! Seize a noble triumph — a great revenge! Save the father, and spare the child.

Beau. [aside]. Joy — joy alike to my hatred and my passion! The haughty Pauline is at last my suppliant. *[Aloud.]* You ask from me what I have not the sublime virtue to grant — a virtue reserved only for the gardener's son! I cannot forego my hopes in the moment of their fulfilment! I adhere to the contract — your father's ruin or your hand.

Pauline. Then all is over. Sir, I have decided.

[The clock strikes one.]

Enter DAMAS and MELNOTTE.

Damas. Your servant, cousin Deschappelles. Let me introduce Colonel Morier.

Mme. Deschap. [curtsying very low]. What, the celebrated hero? This is, indeed, an honour!

[MELNOTTE bows, and remains in the background.]

Damas [to Pauline]. My little cousin, I congratulate you. What, no smile — no blush? You are going to be divorced from poor Melnotte, and marry this rich Gentleman. You ought to be excessively happy!

Pauline. Happy!

Damas. Why, how pale you are, child! — Poor Pauline! Hist — confide in me! Do they force you to this?

Pauline. No!

Damas. You act with your own free consent?

Pauline. My own consent — yes.

Damas. Then you are the most — I will not say what you are.

Pauline. You think ill of me — be it so — yet if you knew all —

Damas. There is some mystery — speak out, Pauline.

Pauline [suddenly]. Oh, perhaps you can save me! you are our relation — our friend. My father is on the verge of bankruptcy — this day he requires a large sum to meet demands that cannot be denied; that sum Beauseant will advance — this hand the condition of the barter. Save me if you have the means — save me! You will be repaid above!

Damas [aside]. I recant — Women are not so bad after all! [Aloud.] Humph, child! I cannot help you — I am too poor.

Pauline. The last plank to which I clung is shivered.

Damas. Hold — you see my friend Morier: Melnotte is his most intimate friend — fought in the same fields — slept in the same tent. Have you any message to send to Melnotte? any word to soften this blow?

Pauline. He knows Melnotte — he will see him

— he will bear to him my last farewell — [approaches MELNOTTE] — He has a stern air — he turns away from me — he despises me! — Sir, one word I beseech you.

Mel. Her voice again! How the old time comes o'er me!

Damas [to Madame]. Don't interrupt them. He is going to tell her what a rascal young Melnotte is; he knows him well, I promise you.

Mme. Deschap. So considerate in you, cousin Damas!

[DAMAS approaches DESCHAPPELLES; converses apart with him in dumb show — DESCHAPPELLES shows him a paper, which he inspects and takes.

Pauline. Thrice have I sought to speak; my courage fails me. —

Sir, is it true that you have known — nay, are The friend of — Melnotte?

Mel. Lady, yes! — Myself And misery know the man!

Pauline. And you will see him, And you will bear to him — ay — word for word, All that this heart, which breaks in parting from him, Would send, ere still for ever?

Mel. He hath told me You have the right to choose from out the world A worthier bridegroom; — he foregoes all claim, Even to murmur at his doom. Speak on!

Pauline. Tell him, for years I never nursed a thought

That was not his; — that on his wandering way,
Daily and nightly, pour'd a mourner's prayers.
Tell him ev'n now that I would rather share
His lowliest lot, — walk by his side, an outcast, —
Work for him, beg with him, — live upon the light
Of one kind smile from him, — than wear the crown
The Bourbon lost!

Mel. [aside]. Am I already mad?
And does delirium utter such sweet words
Into a dreamer's ear? [Aloud]. You love him thus,
And yet desert him?

Pauline. Say, that, if his eye
Could read this heart, — its struggles, its tempta-
tions, —
His love itself would pardon that desertion!
Look on that poor old man, — he is my father;
He stands upon the verge of an abyss! —
He calls his child to save him! Shall I shrink
From him who gave me birth? — withhold my hand, —
And see a parent perish? Tell him this,
And say — that we shall meet again in Heaven!

Mel. Lady — I — I — what is this riddle? —
what
The nature of this sacrifice?
Pauline [pointing to DAMAS]. Go, ask him!
Beau. [from the table]. The papers are prepared —
we only need
. Your hand and seal.

Mel. Stay, lady — one word more.

Pauline. But on thy breast! — *these* tears are sweet
and holy!

M. Deschap. You have won love and honour nobly,
sir!

Take her; — be happy both!

Mme. Deschap. I'm all astonish'd!
Who, then, is Colonel Morier?

Damas. You behold him!

Mel. Morier no more after this happy day!

Iwould not bear again my father's name

Till I could deem it spotless! The hour's come!

Heaven smiled on conscience! As the soldier rose

From rank to rank, how sacred was the fame

That cancell'd crime, and raised him nearer thee!

Mme. Deschap. A colonel and a hero! Well, that's
something!

He's wondrously improved! I wish you joy, sir!

Mel. Ah! the same love that tempts us into sin,
If it be true love, works out its redemption;
And he who seeks repentance for the Past
Should woo the Angel Virtue in the future.

NOT SO BAD AS WE SEEM;

OR,

MANY SIDES TO A CHARACTER.

DEDICATION.

TO

HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE, K.G.

MY LORD DUKE,

This Play is respectfully dedicated to your Grace in token of the earnest gratitude, both of Author and Performers, for the genial and noble sympathy which has befriended their exertions in the cause of their brotherhood.

The debt that we can but feebly acknowledge, may those who come after us seek to repay; and may each loftier Cultivator of Art and Letters, whom the Institution established under your auspices may shelter from care and penury, see on its corner-stone your princely name, — and perpetuate to distant times the affectionate homage it commands from ourselves.

It is this hope that can alone render worthy the tribute which, in my own name as Author, and in the names of my companions the Performers, of the Play first represented at Devonshire House, I now offer to your Grace, with every sentiment that can deepen and endear the respect and admiration.

With which I have the honour to be,

My Lord Duke,

Your Grace's most obedient and faithful Servant,

E. BULWER LYTTON.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

THE DUKE OF MIDDLESEX, *Peers attached to the son of James II.,*
THE EARL OF LOFTUS, *commonly called the First Pretender.*
LORD WILMOT, *a young man at the head of the Mode more than a century ago, son to Lord Loftus.*

MR. SHADOWLY SOTHEAD, *a young gentleman from the city, friend and double to Lord Wilmot.*

HARDMAN, *a rising Member of Parliament, and adherent to Sir Robert Walpole.*

SIR GEOFFREY THORNSIDE, *a gentleman of good family and estate.*

MR. GOODENOUGH EASY, *in business, highly respectable, and a friend of Sir Geoffrey.*

COLONEL FLINT, *a Fire-eater.*

MR. JACOB TONSON, *a Bookseller.*

SMART, *Valet to Lord Wilmot.*

HODGE, *Servant to Sir Geoffrey Thornside.*

PADDY O'SULLIVAN, *Mr. Fallen's Landlord.*

MR. DAVID FALLEN, *Grub Street Author and Pamphleteer.*

Coffee-House Loungers, Drawers, News-men, Watchmen, &c. &c.

LUCY, *daughter to Sir Geoffrey Thornside.*

BARBARA, *daughter to Mr. Easy.*

THE LADY OF DEADMAN'S LANE (LADY THORNSIDE).

Date of Play — The Reign of George I. Scene — London.

Time supposed to be occupied, from the noon of the first day to the afternoon of the second.

NOT SO BAD AS WE SEEM;

OR,

MANY SIDES TO A CHARACTER.

ACT I. — SCENE I.

LORD WILMOT's *Apartment* in St. James's.

Smart [*showing in a Masked Lady.*] My Lord is dressing. As you say, madam, it is late. But though he never wants sleep more than once a week, yet when he does sleep, I am proud to say he sleeps better than any man in the three kingdoms.

Lady. I have heard much of Lord Wilmot's eccentricities — but also of his generosity and honour.

Smart. Yes, madam, nobody like him for speaking ill of himself and doing good to another.

Enter WILMOT.

Wil. "And sleepless lovers just at twelve awake." Any duels to-day, Smart? No — I see something

more dangerous — a woman. [To SMART.] Vanish. [Placing a chair for Lady.] Madam, have I the honour to know you? Condescend to remove your vizard. [Lady lifts her mask.] Very fine woman, still — decidedly dangerous. Madam, allow me one precautionary observation — My affections are engaged.

Lady. So I conjectured; for I have noticed *you* from the window of my house, walking in the garden of Sir Geoffrey Thornside with his fair daughter: and she seems worthy to fix the affections of the most fickle.

Wil. My dear madam, do you know Sir Geoffrey? Bind me to you for life, and say a kind word to him in my favour.

Lady. Can you need it? — young, highborn, accomplished —

Wil. Sir Geoffrey's very objections against me. He says I am a fine gentleman, and has a vehement aversion to that section of mortals, because he implies that a fine gentleman once did him a mortal injury. But you seem moved — dear lady, what is your interest in Sir Geoffrey or myself?

Lady. You shall know later. Tell me, did Lucy Thornside ever speak to you of her mother?

Wil. Only to regret, with tears in her eyes, that she had never known a mother — that lady died, I believe, while Lucy was but an infant.

Lady. When you next have occasion to speak to her, say that you have seen a friend of her mother,

who has something to impart that may contribute to her father's happiness and her own.

Wil. I will do your bidding this day, and —

Soft. [without]. Oh, never mind announcing me, Smart.

Lady [starting up]. I would not be seen here — I must be gone. Call on me at nine o'clock this evening? this is my address.

Enter SOFTHEAD, as LORD WILMOT is protecting Lady's retreat, and stares aghast.

Wil. [aside.] Do not fear him — best little fellow in the world, ambitious to be thought good for nothing, and frightened out of his wits at the sight of a petticoat. [Aloud, as he attends her out.] Allow me to escort your Ladyship.

Soft. Ladyship! — lucky dog. But then he's such a villain!

Wil. [returning, and looking at the address]. Very mysterious visitor — sign of Crown and Portcullis, Deadman's Lane — a very funereal residence. Ha, Softhead! my Pylades — my second self! *Animæ* —

Soft. Enemy!

Wil. *Dimidium meæ.*

Soft. *Dimi!* that's the oath last in fashion, I warrant. [With a swagger and a slap on the back] *Dimidum meæ*, how d'ye do? But what is that lady? — masked too? Oh, Fred, Fred, you are a monster!

Wil. Monster! ay, horrible! That lady may well wear a mask. She has poisoned three husbands.

Soft. *Dimidum meæ.*

Wil. A mere harmless gallantry has no longer a charm for me.

Soft. Nor for me either! [Aside.] Never had.

Wil. Nothing should excite us true men of pleasure but some colossal atrocity, to bring our necks within an inch of the gallows!

Soft. He's a perfect demon! Alas, I shall never come up to *his* mark!

Enter SMART.

Smart. Mr. Hardman, my Lord.

Wil. Hush! Must not shock Mr. Hardman, the most friendly, obliging man, and so clever — will be a minister some day. But not one of *our* set.

Enter HARDMAN.

Hard. And how fares my dear Lord?

Wil. Bravely — and you? Ah! you men who live for others have a hard life of it. Let me present you to my friend, Mr. Shadowly Softhead.

Hard. The son of the great clothier who has such weight in the Guild? I have heard of you from Mr. Easy and others, though never so fortunate as to meet you before, Mr. Softhead.

Soft. *Shadowly Softhead:* — my grandmother was one of the Shadowlys — a genteel family that move about Court. She married a Softhead —

Wil. A race much esteemed in the city.

Hard. A new picture, my Lord? I'm no very great judge — but it seems to me quite a masterpiece.

Wil. I've a passion for art. Sold off my stud to buy that picture. [Aside.] And please my poor father. 'Tis a Murillo.

Hard. A Murillo! you know that Walpole, too, has a passion for pictures. — In despair at this moment that he can't find a Murillo to hang up in his gallery. If ever you want to corrupt the Prime Minister's virtue, you have only to say, "I have got a Murillo."

Wil. Well, if, instead of the pictures, he'll just hang up the *men* he has bought, you may tell him he shall have my Murillo for nothing!

Hard. Bought! now really, my Lord, this is so vulgar a scandal against Sir Robert. Let me assure your Lordship —

Wil. Lordship! Plague on these titles among friends. Why, if the Duke of Middlesex himself — commonly styled "the Proud Duke" — who said to his Duchess, when she astonished his dignity one day with a kiss, "Madam, my first wife was a Percy, and *she* never took such a liberty;" — *

* This well-known anecdote of the Proud Duke of Somerset, and some other recorded traits of the same eminent personage, have been freely applied to the character, intended to illustrate the humour of pride, in the comedy. None of our English memoirs afford, however, instances of that infirmity so extravagant as are to be found in the French.

Hard. Ha! ha! well, if "the Proud Duke" —

Wil. Could deign to come here, we would say,
"How d'ye do, my dear Middlesex!"

Soft. So we would, Fred! Middlesex. — Shouldn't
you like to know a Duke, Mr. Hardman?

Hard. I have known one or two — in opposition:
and had rather too much of 'em.

Soft. Too much of a Duke! La! I could never
have eno' of a Duke!

Hard. You may live to think otherwise.

Enter SMART.

Smart. His Grace the Duke of Middlesex.

Enter DUKE.

Duke. My Lord Wilmot, your most obedient
servant.

Wil. [Aside. Now then, courage!] How d'ye do,
my dear Middlesex?

Duke. "How d'ye do?" "Middlesex!" Gracious
Heaven; what will this age come to?

Hard. [to SOFTHEAD]. Well, it *may* be the fashion,
— yet I could *hardly* advise you to adopt it.

Soft. But if Fred —

Tallamant has an anecdote of the celebrated *Duchesse de Longueville*, which enlivens the burlesque by a bull that no Irish imagination ever surpassed. A surgeon having probably saved her life by bleeding her too suddenly and without sufficient ceremonial — the *Duchesse* said, on recovering herself, that "he was an insolent fellow to have bled her — *in her presence*."

Hard. Oh! certainly Fred is an excellent model —
Soft. Yet there's something very awful in a live
Duke!

Hard. Tut! a mere mortal like ourselves, after
all.

Soft. D'ye really think so? — upon your honour?

Hard. Sir, I'm sure of it, — upon my honour, a
mortal!

Duke. [turning stiffly round, and half rising from his
chair in majestic condescension.]. Your Lordship's friends?
A good day to you, gentlemen!

Soft. And a good day to yourself. My Lord
Du — I mean, my dear boy! — Middlesex, how d'ye
do?

Duke. "Mid!" — "boy!" — "sex!" — "dear!"
I must be in a dream.

Wil. [to SOFTHEAD. Apologise to the Duke. [To
HARDMAN. Then hurry him off into the next room.
Allow me to explain to your Grace.

Soft. But what shall I say?

Hard. Anything most civil and servile.

Soft. I — I — my Lord Duke, I really most
humbly entreat your Grace's pardon, I —

Duke. Small man, your pardon is granted, for
your existence is effaced. So far as my recognition
is necessary to your sense of being, consider yourself
henceforth — annihilated!

Soft. I humbly thank your Grace! Annihilated!
what's that?

Hard. Duke's English for excused. [SOFTHEAD

wants to get back to the DUKE.] What! have not you had enough of the Duke?

Soft. No, now we've made it up. I never bear malice. I should like to know more of him; one can't get at a Duke every day. If he did call me "small man," he *is* a Duke, — and such a remarkably fine one!

Hard. [drawing him away]. You deserve to be haunted by him! No — no! Come into the next room.

[*Exeunt through side-door.* SOFTHEAD very reluctant to leave the DUKE.]

Duke. There's something portentous in that small man's audacity. — Quite an aberration of Nature! But we are alone now, we two gentlemen. Your father is my friend, and his son must have courage and honour.

Wil. Faith, I had the courage to say I would call your Grace "Middlesex," and the honour to keep to my word. So I've given good proof that I've courage and honour enough for anything!

Duke [affectionately]. You're a wild boy. You have levities and follies. But alas! even rank does not exempt its possessor from the faults of humanity. Very strange! My own dead brother — [with a look of disgust.]

Wil. Your brother, Lord Henry de Mowbray? My dear Duke, pray forgive me; but I hope there's no truth in what Tonson, the bookseller, told me at Will's, — that your brother had left behind certain

Confessions or Memoirs, which are all that might be apprehended from a man of a temper so cynical, and whose success in the gay world was so — terrible. [Aside. Determined seducer and implacable cut-throat!]

Duke. Ha! then those Memoirs exist! My brother kept his profligate threat. I shall be ridiculed, lampooned. I, the head of the Mowbrays! Powers above, is nothing on earth, then, left sacred! Can you learn in whose hands is this scandalous record?

Wil. I will try. Leave it to me. I know Lord Henry bore you a grudge for renouncing his connexion, on account of his faults — of humanity! I remember an anecdote how he fought with a husband, some poor devil named Morland, for a boast in a tavern, which — Oh, but we'll not speak of that. We *must* get the Memoir. We gentlemen have all common cause here.

Duke [*taking his hand*]. Worthy son of your father. You deserve, indeed, the trust that I come to confide to you. Listen. His Majesty, King James, having been deceived by vague promises in the Expedition of 'Fifteen, has very properly refused to imperil his rights again, unless upon the positive pledge of a sufficient number of persons of influence, to risk life and all in his service. Myself and some others, not wholly unknown to you, propose to join in a pledge which our King with such reason exacts. Your assistance, my Lord, would be valuable, for you are the idol of the young. Doubts were entertained of your loyalty. I

have come to dispel them — a word will suffice. If we succeed, you restore the son of a Stuart; if we fail, — you will go to the scaffold by the side of John Duke of Middlesex! Can you hesitate? or is silence assent?

Wil. My dear Duke, forgive me that I dismiss with a jest a subject so fatal, if gravely entertained. I have so many other engagements at present that, just to recollect them, I must keep my head on my shoulders. Accept my humblest excuses.

Duke. Accept mine for mistaking the son of Lord Loftus. [Goes up to C. D.]

Wil. Lord Loftus again! Stay. Your Grace spoke of persons not wholly unknown to me. I entreat you to explain.

Duke. My Lord, I have trusted you with my own life; but to compromise by a word the life of another! — permit me to remind your Lordship that I am John Duke of Middlesex. [Exit.]

Wil. Can my father have entangled himself in some Jacobite plot? How shall I find out? — Hal Hardman, Hardman, I say! Here's a man who finds everything out.

Enter HARDMAN and SOFTHEAD.

Softhead, continue annihilated for the next five minutes or so. These books will help to the cessation of your existence, mental and bodily. Mr. Locke, on the Understanding, will show that you have not an innate

idea; and the Essay of Bishop Berkely will prove you have not an atom of matter.

Soft. But --

Wil. No buts! — they're the fashion.

Soft. Oh, if they're the fashion —

[Seats himself at the further end of the room; commences vigorously with Berkely and Locke, first one and then the other, and after convincing himself that they are above his comprehension, gradually subsides from despair into dozing.]

Wil. [to HARDMAN]. My dear Hardman, you are the only one of my friends whom, in spite of your politics, my high Tory father condescends to approve of. Every one knows that his family were stout cavaliers attached to the Stuarts.

Hard. [Aside.] Ah! I guess why the Jacobite Duke has been here. I must look up David Fallen; he is in all the schemes for the Stuarts. Well — and —

Wil. And the Jacobites are daring and numerous; and — in short, I should just like to know that my father views things with the eyes of our more wise generation.

Hard. Why not ask him yourself?

Wil. Alas! I'm in disgrace; he even begs me not to come to his house. You see he wants me to marry.

Hard. But your father bade me tell you, he would leave your choice to yourself; — would marriage then seem so dreadful a sacrifice?

Wil. Sacrifice! Leave my choice to myself? My dear father. [Rings the hand-bell.] Smart! [Enter SMART.] Order my coach.

Hard. This impatience looks very like love.

Wil. Pooh! what do you know about love? — you, — who love only ambition! Solemn old jilt, with whom one's never safe from a rival.

Hard. Yes; — always safe from a rival, both in love and ambition, if one will watch to detect, and then scheme to destroy him.

Wil. Destroy — ruthless exterminator! May we never be rivals! Pray keep to ambition.

Hard. [Aside]. But ambition lures me to love. This fair Lucy Thornside, as rich as she's fair! woe indeed to the man who shall be my rival with her. I will call there to-day.

Wil. Then, you'll see my father, and sound him?

Hard. I will do so.

Wil. You are the best friend I have. If ever I can serve you in return —

Hard. Tut! in serving my friends, 'tis myself that I serve. [Exit.

Wil. [after a moment's thought]. Now to Lucy. Ha! Softhead.

Soft. [waking up]. Heh!

Wil. [Aside]. I must put this suspicious Sir Geoffrey on a wrong scent. If Softhead were to make love to the girl — violently — desperately.

Soft. [yawning]. I would give the world to be tucked up in bed now!

Wil. I've a project — an intrigue — be all life and all fire! Why, you tremble —

Soft. With excitement. Proceed!

Wil. There's a certain snarling, suspicious Sir Geoffrey Thornsidge, with a beautiful daughter, to whom he is a sort of a one-sided bear of a father — all growl and no hug.

Soft. I know him!

Wil. You? How?

Soft. Why, his most intimate friend is Mr. Good-enough Easy.

Wil. Lucy presented me to a Mistress Barbara Easy. Pretty girl.

Soft. You are not courting her?

Wil. Not at present. Are you?

Soft. Why, my father wants me to marry her.

Wil. You refused?

Soft. No. I did not.

Wil. Had *she* that impertinence?

Soft. No; but her father had. He wished for it once; but since I've become *à la mode*, and made a sensation at St. James's, he says that his daughter shall be courted no more by a man of such fashion. Oh! he's low, Mr. Easy: very good-humoured and hearty, but respectable, sober, and square-toed; — decidedly low! — City bred! So I can't go much to his house; but I see Barbara sometimes at Sir Geoffrey's.

Wil. Excellent! Listen: I am bent upon adding Lucy Thornsidge to the list of my conquests. But her

churl of a father has already given me to understand that he hates a lord —

Soft. Hates a lord! Can such men be?

Wil. And despises a man *à la mode*.

Soft. I knew he was eccentric, but this is downright insanity.

Wil. Brief. I see very well that he'll soon shut his doors in my face, unless I make him believe that it is not his daughter who attracts me to his house; so I tell you what we will do; — you shall make love to Lucy — violent love, you rogue.

Soft. But Sir Geoffrey knows I'm in love with the other.

Wil. That's over. Father refused you — transfer of affection; natural pique and human inconstancy. And, in return, to oblige you, I'll make love just as violent to Mistress Barbara Easy.

Soft. Stop, stop; I don't see the necessity of that.

Wil. Pooh! nothing more clear. Having thus duped the two lookers on, we shall have ample opportunity to change partners, and hands across, then down the middle and up again.

Enter SMART.

Smart. Your coach waits, my Lord.

Wil. Come along. Fie! that's not the way to conduct a cane. Has not Mr. Pope, our great poet of fashion, given you the nicest instructions in that art?

"Sir Plume, of amber snuff-box justly vain,
And the nice conduct of a clouded cane."

The cane does not conduct you; you conduct the cane. Thus, with a *debonair* swing. Now, t'other hand on your haunch; easy, *dégage* — impudently graceful; with the air of a gentleman, and the heart of a — monster! *Allons! Vive la joie.*

Soft. *Vive la jaw*, indeed. I feel as if I were going to be hanged. *Allons! Vive la jaw!* [Exeunt.

ACT II. — SCENE I.

Library in the house of SIR GEOFFREY THORNSIDE — At the back a large window opening nearly to the ground — Side-door to an adjoining room — Style of decoration, that introduced from the Dutch in the reign of William III. (old-fashioned, therefore, at the date assigned to the Play) — rich and heavy; oak pannels, partly gilt; high-backed chairs, &c.

Enter SIR GEOFFREY and HODGE.

Sir Geof. But I say the dog did howl last night, and it is a most suspicious circumstance.

Hodge. Fegs, my dear Measter, if you'se think that these Lunnon thieves have found out that your honour's rents were paid last woik, mayhap I'd best sleep here in the libery.

Sir Geof. [Aside]. How does he know I keep my monies here?

Hodge. Zooks! I'se the old blunderbuss, and that will boite better than any dog, I'se warrant!

Sir Geof. [Aside]. I begin to suspect him. For ten years have I nursed that viper at my hearth, and now he wants to sleep in my library, with a loaded blunderbuss, in case I should come in and detect him. I see murder in his very face. How blind I've been!] *Hodge,*

you are very good — very; come closer. [*Aside.* What a felon step he has!] But I don't keep my rents here, they're all gone to the banker's.

Hodge. Mayhap I'd best go and lock up the plate; or will you send that to the banker's?

Sir Geof. [*Aside.* I wonder if he has got an accomplice at the banker's! It looks uncommonly like it.] No, I'll not send the plate to the banker's, I'll — consider. You've not detected the miscreant who has been flinging flowers into the library the last four days? — or observed any one watching your master when he walks in his garden, from the window of that ugly old house in Deadman's Lane?

Hodge. With the sign of the Crown and Poor Culley! Why, it maun be very leately. 'Tint a week ago 'sin it war empty.

Sir Geof. [*Aside.* How he evades the question! — just as they do at the Old Bailey.] Get along with you and feed the house-dog — *he's honest!*

Hodge. Yes, your honour. [Exit.]

Sir Geof. I'm a very unhappy man, very. Never did harm to any one — done good to many. And ever since I was a babe in the cradle, all the world have been conspiring and plotting against me. It certainly is an exceedingly wicked world; and what its attraction can be to the other worlds, that they should have kept it spinning through space for six thousand years, I can't possibly conceive — unless they are as bad as itself; I should not wonder. That new theory of attraction is a very suspicious circumstance against

the planets — there's a gang of 'em! [*A bunch of flowers is thrown in at the window.*] Heaven defend me! There it is again! This is the fifth bunch of flowers that's been thrown at me through the window — what can it possibly mean? — the most alarming circumstance.

[*Cautiously poking at the flowers with his sword.*]

Mr. Goodenough Easy [without]. Yes, Barbara, go and find Mistress Lucy. [*Entering.*] How d'ye do, my hearty?

Sir Geof. Ugh! hearty, indeed!

Easy. Why, what's the matter? what are you poking at those flowers for? — is there a snake in them?

Sir Geof. Worse than that, I suspect! Hem! Good-enough Eeasy, I believe I may trust you —

Easy. You trusted me once with five thousand pounds.

Sir Geof. Dear, dear, I forgot that. But you paid me back, *Easy*?

Easy. Of course; but the loan saved my credit, and made my fortune: so the favour 's the same.

Sir Geof. Ugh! Don't say that; favours and perfidy go together! a truth I learned early in life. What favours I heaped on my foster-brother. And did not he conspire with my cousin to set my own father against me; and trick me out of my heritage?

Easy. But you've heaped favours as great on the son of the scamp of a foster-brother; and he —

Sir Geof. Ay! but he don't know of them. And then there was my — that girl's mother —

Easy. Ah! that was an affliction which might well turn a man, pre-inclined to suspicion, into a thorough self-tormentor for the rest of his life. But she loved you dearly once, old friend; and were she yet alive, and could be proved guiltless after all —

Sir Geof. Guiltless! Sir?

Easy. Well — well! we agreed never to talk upon that subject. Come, come, what of the nosegay?

Sir Geof. Yes, yes, the nosegay! Hark! I suspect some design on my life. The dog howled last night. When I walk in the garden, somebody or something (can't see what it is) seems at the watch in a window in Deadman's Lane — pleasant name for a street at the back of one's premises! And what looks blacker than all, for five days running, has been thrown in at me, yonder, surreptitiously and anonymously, what you call — a nosegay!

Easy. Ha! ha! you lucky dog! — you are still not bad-looking! Depend on it the flowers come from a woman.

Sir Geof. A woman! — my worst fears are confirmed! In the small city of Placentia, in one year, there were no less than seven hundred cases of slow poisoning, and all by women. Flowers were among the instruments they employed, steeped in laurel water and other mephitic preparations. Those flowers are poisoned. Not a doubt of it! — how very awful!

Easy. But why should any one take the trouble to poison you, Geoffrey?

Sir Geof. I don't know. But I don't know why seven hundred people in one year were poisoned in Placentia. Hodge! Hodge!

Enter HODGE.

Sweep away those flowers! — lock 'em up with the rest in the coal-hole. I'll examine them all chemically, by and by, with precaution. [Exit HODGE] Don't smell at 'em; and, above all, don't let the house-dog smell at 'em.

Easy. Ha! ha!

Sir Geof. [Aside.] Ugh! — that brute's laughing! — no more feeling than a brick-bat!] Goodenough Easy, you are a very happy man.

Easy. Happy, yes. I could be happy on bread and water.

Sir Geof. And would toast your bread at a conflagration, and fill your jug from a deluge! Ugh! I've a trouble you are more likely to feel for, as you've a girl of your own to keep out of mischief. A man named Wilmot, and styled "my Lord," has called here a great many times; he pretends he saved my — ahem! — that is, Lucy, from footpads, when she was coming home from your house in a sedan chair. And I suspect that man means to make love to her! —

Easy. Egad! that's the only likely suspicion you've hit on this many a day. I've heard of Lord Wilmot.

Softhead professes to copy him. Softhead, the son of a trader! *he* be a lounger at White's and Will's, and dine with wits and fine gentlemen! *He* live with lords! — *he* mimic fashion! No! I've respect for even the faults of a man; but I've none for the tricks of a monkey.

Sir Geof. Ugh! you're so savage on Softhead, I suspect 'tis from envy. Man and monkey, indeed! If a ribbon is tied to the tail of a monkey, it is not the man it enrages; it is some other monkey whose tail has no ribbon!

Easy [angrily]. I disdain your insinuations. Do you mean to imply that I am a monkey? I will not praise myself; but at least a more steady, respectable, sober —

Sir Geof. Ugh! sober! — I suspect you'd get as drunk as a lord, if a lord passed the bottle.

Easy. Now, now, now. Take care; — you'll put me in a passion.

Sir Geof. There — there — beg pardon. But I fear you've a sneaking respect for a lord.

Easy. Sir, I respect the British Constitution and the House of Peers as a part of it; but as for a lord in himself, with a mere handle to his name, a paltry title! *That* can have no effect on a Briton of independence and sense. And that's just the difference between Softhead and me. But as you don't like for a son-in-law the real fine gentleman; perhaps you've a mind to the copy. I am sure you are welcome to Softhead.

Sir Geof. Ugh! I've other designs for the girl.

Easy. Have you? What? Perhaps your favourite, young Hardman? — by the way, I've not met him here lately.

Enter LUCY and BARBARA.

Lucy. O, my dear father, forgive me if I disturb you; but I did so long to see you!

Sir Geof. Why?

Lucy. Ah, father, is it so strange that your child —

Sir Geof. [interrupting her]. Why?

Lucy. Because Hodge told me you'd been alarmed last night — the dog howled! But it was full moon last night, and he will howl at the moon!

Sir Geof. [Aside]. How did she know it was full moon? I suspect she was looking out of the window —

[Enter HODGE, announcing LORD WILMOT and MR. SHADOWLY SOFTHEAD]. — Wilmot! my suspicions are confirmed; she was looking out of the window! This comes of Shakspeare having written that infernal incendiary trash about Romeo and Juliet!

Enter WILMOT and SOFTHEAD.

Wil. Your servant, ladies; — Sir Geoffrey, your servant. I could not refuse Mr. Softhead's request to inquire after your health.

Sir Geof. I thank your lordship; but when my health wants inquiring after I send for the doctor.

Wil. Is it possible you can do anything so dangerous and rash?

Sir Geof. How? — how?

Wil. Send for the very man who has an interest in your being ill!

Sir Geof. [Aside]. That's very true. I did not think he had so much sense in him!

[*SIR GEOFFREY and EASY retire up the stage.*

Wil. I need not inquire how you are, ladies? When Hebé retired from the world, she divided her bloom between you. Mistress Barbara, vouchsafe me the honour a queen accords to the meanest of her gentlemen.

[*Kisses BARBARA's hand, and leads her aside, conversing in dumb show.*

Soft. Ah, Mistress Lucy, vouchsafe me the honour which — [Aside. But she don't hold her hand in the same position.]

Easy. Bravo! — bravo! Master Softhead! — *Encore!*

Soft. Bravo! — *Encore!* I don't understand you, Mr. Easy.

Easy. That bow of yours! Perfect. Plain to see you have not forgotten the old Dancing Master in Crooked Lane.

Soft. [Aside. I'm not an inconstant man; but I'll show that City fellow, there are other ladies in town besides his daughter.] — *Dimidium meæ,* how pretty you are, Mistress Lucy! [Walks aside with her.

Sir Geof. That popinjay of a lord is more attentive to Barbara than ever he was to the other.

Easy. Hey! hey! D'ye think so?

Sir Geof. I suspect he has heard how rich you are.

WILMOT and BARBARA approaching.

Bar. Papa, Lord Wilmot begs to be presented to you.

[*Bows interchanged.* WILMOT offers snuff-box. EASY at first declines, then accepts — sneezes violently; unused to snuff.]

Sir Geof. He! he! quite clear! — titled fortune-hunter. Over head and ears in debt, I dare say. [Takes WILMOT aside.] Pretty girl, Mistress Barbara! Eh?

Wil. Pretty! Say beautiful!

Sir Geof. He! he! Her father will give her fifty thousand pounds down on the wedding-day.

Wil. I venerate the British merchant who can give his daughter fifty thousand pounds! What a smile she has! [Hooking his arm into SIR GEOFFREY'S.] I say, Sir Geoffrey, you see I'm very shy — bashful, indeed — and Mr. Easy is watching every word I say to his daughter: so embarrassing! Couldn't you get him out of the room?

Sir Geof. Mighty bashful, indeed! Turn the oldest friend I have out of my room, in order that you may make love to his daughter! [Turns away.]

Wil. [to EASY]. I say, Mr. Easy. My double, there, Softhead, is so shy — bashful indeed — and that sus-

picious Sir Geoffrey is watching every word he says to Mistress Lucy: so embarrassing! Do get your friend out of the room, will you!

Easy. Ha! ha! Certainly, my lord. [Aside. I see he wants to be alone with my Barbara. What will they say in Lombard-street, when she's my lady? Shouldn't wonder if they returned me M. P. for the city.] Come into the next room, Geoffrey; and tell me your designs for Lucy.

Sir Geof. Oh, very well! You wish to encourage that pampered young — Satrap! How he does love a lord, and how a lord does love fifty thousand pounds! He! he!

[*Exeunt* SIR GEOFFREY and EASY.

Wil. [running to LUCY and pushing aside SOFTHEAD]. Return to your native allegiance. Truce with the enemy and exchange of prisoners.

[Leads LUCY aside — she rather grave and reluctant.

Bar. So, you'll not speak to me, Mr. Softhead; words are too rare with you fine gentlemen to throw away upon old friends.

Soft. Ahem!

Bar. You don't remember the winter evenings you used to pass at our fire-side? nor the mistletoe bough at Christmas? nor the pleasant games at Blind-man's Buff and Hunt the Slipper? nor the strong tea I made you when you had the migraine? Nor how I prevented your eating Banbury cake at supper, when you know it always disagrees with you? — But I suppose you

are so hardened that you can eat Banbury cake every night now! — I'm sure 'tis nothing to me!

Soft. Those recollections of one's early innocence are very melting! One renounces a great deal of happiness for renown and ambition. — Barbara!

Bar. Shadowly!

Soft. However one may rise in life — however the fashion may compel one to be a monster —

Bar. A monster!

Soft. Yes, Fred and I are both monsters! Still — still — still — 'Ecod, I do love you with all my heart, and that's the truth of it.

WILMOT and LUCY advancing.

Lucy. A friend of my lost mother's. Oh! yes, dear Lord Wilmot, do see her again — learn what she has to say. There are times when I so long to speak of that — my mother; but my father shuns even to mention her name. Ah, he must have loved her well!

Wil. What genuine susceptibility! I have found what I have sought all my life, the union of womanly feeling and childlike innocence.

[Attempts to take her hand; Lucy withdraws it coyly.

Nay, nay, if the renunciation of all youthful levities and follies, if the most steadfast adherence to your side — despite all the chances of life, all temptations, all dangers — [HARDMAN'S voice without.

Bar. Hist! some one coming.

Wil. Change partners; hands across. My angel Barbara!

Enter HARDMAN.

Hard. Lord Wilmot here!

Wil. What! does *he* know Sir Geoffrey?

Bar. Oh yes. Sir Geoffrey thinks there's nobody like him.

Wil. Well met, my dear Hardman. So you are intimate here?

Hard. Ay; and you?

Wil. An acquaintance in its cradle. Droll man, Sir Geoffrey; I delight in odd characters. Besides, here are other attractions. [Returning to BARBARA.

Hard. [Aside]. If he be my rival! Hum! I hear from David Fallen that his father's on the brink of high treason! That secret gives a hold on the son.

[Joins LUCY.

Wil. [to BARBARA]. You understand; 'tis a compact. You will favour my stratagem?

Bar. Yes: and you'll engage to cure Softhead of his taste for the fashion, and send him back to — the City.

Wil. Since you live in the City, and condescend to regard such a monster!

Bar. Why, we were brought up together. His health is so delicate; I should like to take care of him. Heigho! I am afraid 'tis too late, and papa will never forgive his past follies.

Wil. Yet papa seems very good-natured. Perhaps there's another side to his character?

Bar. Oh yes! He is such a very independent man, my papa! and has *such* a contempt for people who go out of their own rank, and make fools of themselves for the sake of example.

Wil. Never fear; I'll ask him to dine, and open his heart with a cheerful glass.

Bar. Cheerful glass! You don't know papa — the soberest man! If there's anything on which he's severe, 'tis a cheerful glass.

Wil. So, so! does not he *ever* — get a little excited?

Bar. Excited! Don't think of it! Besides, he is so in awe of Sir Geoffrey, who would tease him out of his life, if he could but hear that papa was so inconsistent as to — as to —

Wil. As to get — a little excited? [Aside. These hints should suffice me! 'Gad, if I could make him tipsy for once in a way! — I'll try.] Adieu, my sweet Barbara, and rely on the zeal of your faithful ally. Stay; tell Mr. Easy that he must lounge into Will's. I will look out for him there in about a couple of hours. He'll meet many friends from the City, and all the wits and fine gentlemen. *Allons! Vive la joie!* Softhead, we'll have a night of it!

Soft. Ah! those were pleasant nights when one went to bed at half after ten. Heigho!

As HARDMAN kisses LUCY's hand, WILMOT gaily kisses BARBARA'S — HARDMAN observes him with a little suspicion — WILMOT returns his look lightly and carelessly — LUCY and BARBARA conscious.

ACT III. — SCENE I.

Will's Coffee-house; occupying the depth of the stage. Various groups; some seated in boxes, some standing. In a box at the side, DAVID FALLEN seated writing.

Enter EASY, speaking to various acquaintances as he passes to the background.

How d'ye do? — Have you seen my Lord Wilmot? — Good day. — Yes; I seldom come here; but I've promised to meet an intimate friend of mine — Lord Wilmot. — Servant, sir! — looking for my friend Wilmot: — Oh! not come yet! — hum — ha! — charming young man, Wilmot: head of the mode; generous, but prudent. I know all his affairs.

Enter Newsman.

Great news! great news! Suspected Jacobite Plot! Fears of ministers! — Army to be increased! — Great news!

[*Coffee-house frequenters gather round Newsman — take papers — form themselves into fresh groups.*

Enter HARDMAN.

Hard. I have sent off my letter to Sir Robert Wal-

pole. This place, he must give it; the first favour I have asked. Hope smiles; I am at peace with all men. Now to save Wilmot's father. [Approaches the box at which DAVID FALLEN is writing, and stoops down, as if arranging his buckle.] [To FALLEN. Hist! Whatever the secret, remember, not a word save to me.]

[Passes down the stage, and is eagerly greeted by various frequenters of the Coffee-house.

Enter LORD LOFTUS.

Lord Lof. Drawer, I engage this box; give me the newspaper. So — “Rumoured Jacobite plot —”

Enter the DUKE OF MIDDLESEX.

Duke. My dear Lord, I obey your appointment. But is not the place you select rather strange?

Lof. Be seated, I pray you. No place so fit for our purpose. First, because its very publicity prevents all suspicion. We come to a coffee-house, where all ranks and all parties assemble, to hear the news, like the rest. And, secondly, we could scarcely meet our agent anywhere else. He is a Tory pamphleteer: was imprisoned for our sake in the time of William and Mary. If we, so well known to be Tories, are seen to confer with him here, 'twill only be thought that we are suggesting some points in a pamphlet. May I beckon our agent?

Duke. Certainly. He risks his life for us; he shall be duly rewarded. Let him sit by our side. — [LORD

LOFTUS motions to DAVID FALLEN, who takes up his pamphlet and approaches openly.] — I have certainly seen somewhere before that very thin man. Be seated, sir. Honourable danger makes all men equal.

Fal. No, my Lord Duke. I know you not. It is the Earl I confer with. [Aside. I never stood in *his* hall, with lacqueys and porters.]

Duke. Powers above! That scare-crow rejects my acquaintance! Portentous!

[*Stunned and astonished.*]

Lof. Observe, Duke, we speak in a sort of jargon. Pamphlet means messenger. [To *FALLEN* aloud.] Well, Mr. Fallen, when will the pamphlet be ready?

Fal. [aloud]. To-morrow, my Lord, exactly at one o'clock.

Duke [still bewildered]. I don't understand —

Lof. Hush! Walpole laughs at pamphlets, but would hang messengers. [Aloud]. To-morrow, not today! Well, more time for —

Fal. Subscribers. Thank you, my Lord.

[*Whispering.*]

Where shall the messenger meet you?]

Lof. At the back of the Duke's new house, there is a quiet, lone place —

Fal. [*whispering.*] By the old mill near the Thames? I know it. The messenger shall be there. The signal word, "Marston Moor." No conversation should pass. But who brings the packet? That's the first step of danger.

Duke [suddenly rousing himself, and with dignity]. Then 'tis mine, sir, in right of my birth.

Fal. [aloud]. I'll attend to all your Lordship's suggestions; they're excellent, and will startle this vile administration. Many thanks to your Lordship.

[Returns to his table and resumes his writing. Groups point and murmur. JACOB TONSON advances.

Easy. That pestilent scribbler, David Fallen! Another libellous pamphlet as bitter as the last, I'll swear.

Ton. Bitter as gall, sir, I am proud to say. Your servant; Jacob Tonson, the bookseller, — at your service. I advanced a pound upon it.

Duke. I will meet you in the Mall to-morrow, a quarter after one precisely. We may go now? Powers above! — his mind's distracted — he walks out before me!

Lof. [drawing back at the door]. I follow you, Duke.

Duke. My dear friend — if you really insist on it?

[Exeunt, bowing.

Hard. [as the Drawer places the wine, &c., on the table]. Let me offer you a glass of wine, Mr. Fallen — [Aside. Well? —]

[FALLEN, who has been writing, pushes the paper towards him.

Hard. [reading]. "At one to-morrow — by the old mill near the Thames — Marston Moor — the Duke in person" — So! We must save these men. — I will call on you in the morning, and concert the means.

Fal. Yes, save, not destroy, these enthusiasts. I'm resigned to the name of a hireling — not to that of a butcher!

Hard. You serve both Whig and Jacobite; do you care then for either?

Fal. Sneering politician! what has either cared for me? I entered the world, devoted heart and soul to two causes — the throne of the Stuart, the glory of Letters. I saw them both as a poet. My father left me no heritage but loyalty and learning. Charles the Second praised my verse, and I starved; James the Second praised my prose, and I starved: the reign of King William — I passed *that* in prison!

Hard. But the ministers of Anne were gracious to writers.

Fal. And offered me a pension to belie my past life, and write Odes on the Queen who had dethroned her own father. I was not then disenchanted — I refused. That's years ago. If I starved, I had fame. Now came my worst foes, my own fellow-writers. What is fame but a fashion? A jest upon Grub Street, a rhyme from young Pope, could jeer a score of gray labourers like me out of their last consolation. Time and hunger tame all. I could still starve myself; I have six children at home — they must live.

Hard. [Aside. This man has genius — he might have been a grace to his age.] I'm perplexed; Sir Robert —

Fal. Disdains letters — I've renounced them. He pays services like these. Well — I serve him. Leave me; go!

Hard. [rising]. Not so bad as he seems — another side to the character.

Enter Drawer with a letter to HARDMAN.

Hard. [Aside]. From Walpole! Now then! my fate — my love — my fortunes!

Easy [peeping over HARDMAN's shoulder]. He has got a letter from the Prime Minister, marked "private and confidential." [Great agitation.] After all, he is a very clever fellow.

[*Coffee-house frequenters evince the readiest assent, and the liveliest admiration.*

Hard. [advancing and reading the letter]. "My dear Hardman, — Extremely sorry. Place in question absolutely wanted to conciliate some noble family otherwise dangerous.* Another time, more fortunate. Fully sensible of your valuable service. — ROBERT WALPOLE." — Refused! Let him look to himself! I will — I will — Alas! he is needed by my country; and I am powerless against him. [Seats himself.

Enter WILMOT and SOFTHEAD.

Wil. Drawer! a private room — covers for six —

* As Walpole was little inclined to make it a part of his policy to conciliate those whose opposition might be dangerous, while he was so fond of power as to be jealous of talent not wholly subservient to him, the reluctance to promote Mr. Hardman, implied in the insincerity of his excuse, may be supposed to arise from his knowledge of that gentleman's restless ambition and determined selfwill.

dinner in an hour!* And — drawer! Tell Mr. Tonus not to go yet. — Softhead, we'll have an orgy to-night, worthy the days of King Charles the Second.

Softhead, let me present you to our boon companions; — my friend, Lord Strongbow (hardest drinker in England); Sir John Bruin, best boxer in England — threshed Figg; quarrelsome but pleasant: Colonel Flint — finest gentleman in England, and, out and out, the best fencer; mild as a lamb, but can't bear contradiction, and, on the point of honour, inexorable. Now, for the sixth. Ha, Mr. Easy! (I ask him to serve you.) Easy, your hand! So charmed that you've come. You'll dine with us — give up five invitations on purpose. Do — *sans cérémonie*.

Easy. Why, really, my Lord, a plain sober man like me would be out of place —

Wil. If that's all, never fear. Live with us, and we'll make another man of you, *Easy!*

Easy. What captivating familiarity! Well, I cannot resist your Lordship. [*Strutting down the room, and speaking to his acquaintances.*] Yes, my friend Wilmot — Lord Wilmot — will make me dine with him. Pleasant man, my friend Wilmot. We dine together to-day.

[*SOFTHEAD retires to the background with the other invited guests; but trying hard to escape SIR JOHN BRUIN, the boxer, and COL. FLINT, the fencer fastens himself on EASY with an air of patronage.*

* It was not the custom at Will's to serve dinners; and the exception in favour of my Lord Wilmot proves his influence as a man *à la mode*.

Wil. [Aside.] Now to serve the dear Duke.] You have not yet brought the memoir of a late Man of Quality.

Ton. Not yet, my Lord; just been trying; hard work. [Wipes his forehead.] But the person who has it is luckily very poor! one of my own authors.

Wil. [Aside.] His eye turns to that forlorn-looking spectre I saw him tormenting.] That must be one of your authors: he looks so lean, Mr. Tonson?

Ton. Hush; that's the man! made a noise in his day; David Fallen.

Wil. David Fallen, whose books, when I was but a schoolboy, made me first take to reading, — not as taskwork, but pleasure. How much I do owe him!

[*Bows very low to MR. FALLEN.*

Ton. My Lord bows very low! Oh, if your Lordship knows Mr. Fallen, pray tell him not to stand in his own light. I would give him a vast sum for the memoir, — two hundred guineas; on my honour I would! [Whispering.] Scandal, my Lord; sell like wild-fire. — I say, Mr. Hardman, I observed you speak to poor David. Can't you help me here? [Whispering.] Lord Henry de Mowbray's Private Memoirs! Fallen has them, and refuses to sell. Love Adventures; nuts for the public. Only just got a peep myself. But such a confession about the beautiful Lady Morland.

Hard. Hang Lady Morland!

Ton. Besides — shows up his own brother! Jacobite family secrets. Such a card for the Whigs!

Hard. Confound the Whigs! What do I care?

Wil. I'll see to it, Tonson. Give me Mr. Fallen's private address.

Ton. But pray be discreet, my Lord. If that knave Curril should get wind of the scent, he'd try to spoil my market with my own author. The villain!

Wil. [Aside.] Curril? Why, I have mimick'd Curril so exactly that Pope himself was deceived, and, stifling with rage, ordered me out of the room. I have it! Mr. Curril shall call upon Fallen the first thing in the morning, and outbid Mr. Tonson] Thank you, sir. [Taking the address.] Moody, my Hardman? some problem in political ethics? You turn away, — you have a grief you'll not tell me — why, this morning I asked you a favour; from that moment I had a right to your confidence, for a favour degrades when it does not come from a friend.

Hard. You charm, you subdue me, and I feel for once how necessary to a man is the sympathy of another. Your hand, Wilmot. This is secret — I, too, then presume to love. One above me in fortune; it may be in birth. But a free state lifts those it employs to a par with its nobles. A post in the Treasury of such nature is vacant; I have served the minister, men say, with some credit; and I asked for the gift without shame — 'twas my due. Walpole needs the office, not for reward to the zealous, but for bribe to the doubtful. See, [giving letter] "Noble family to conciliate." Ah, the drones have the honey!

Wil. [reading and returning the letter]. And had you this post, you think you could gain the lady you love?

Hard. At least it would have given me courage to ask. Well, well, well, — a truce with my egotism, — you at least, my fair Wilmot, fair in form, fair in fortune, you need fear no rebuff where you place your affections.

Wil. Why, the lady's father sees only demerits in what you think my advantages.

Hard. You mistake, I know the man much better than you do; and look, even now he is gazing upon you as fondly as if on the coronet that shall blazon the coach of my lady, his daughter.

Wil. Gazing on me? — where?

Hard. Yonder — Ha! is it not Mr. Easy, whose —

Wil. Mr. Easy! you too taken in! Hark, secret for secret — 'tis Lucy Thornside I love.

Hard. You — stun me!

Wil. But what a despot love is, allows no thought, not its slave! They told me below that my father had been here; have you seen him?

Hard. Ay.

Wil. And sounded?

Hard. No — better than that — I have taken precautions. I must leave you now; you shall know the result to-morrow afternoon. [Aside. Your father's life in these hands — his ransom what I please to demand. — Ah, joy! I am myself once again. Fool to think man could be my friend! Ah, joy! born but

for the strife and the struggle, it is only 'mid foes that my invention is quickened! Halfway to my triumph, now that I know the rival to vanquish!] [To FALLEN. Engage the messenger at one, forget not. Nothing else till I see you.] [To WILMOT.] Your hand once again. To-day I'm your envoy; [Aside: to-morrow your master.]

[FALLEN folds up papers and exit.

Wil. The friendliest man that ever lived since the days of Damon and Pythias: I'm a brute if I don't serve him in return. To lose the woman he loves for want of this pitiful place. Saint Cupid forbid! Let me consider! Many sides to a character — I think I could here hit the right one better than Hardman. Ha! ha! Excellent! My Murillo! I'll not sell myself, but I'll buy the Prime Minister! Excuse me, my friends; urgent business; I shall be back ere the dinner hour; the room is prepared. Drawer, show in these gentlemen: Hardman shall have his place and his wife, and I'll bribe the arch-briber! Ho! my lackies, my coach, there! Ha, ha! bribe the Prime Minister! There never was such a fellow as I am for crime and audacity.

[Exit WILMOT.

Colonel Flint. Your arm, Mr. Softhead.

Soft. And Fred leaves me in the very paws of this tiger!

[Exeunt.

SCENE II.

The Library in Sir GEOFFREY's House.

Enter SIR GEOFFREY.

I'm followed! I'm dogged! I go out for a walk unsuspiciously; and behind creeps a step, pit, pat; feline and stealthy; I turn, not a soul to be seen — I walk on; pit, pat, stealthy and feline! turn again; and lo! a dark form like a phantom, muffled and masked — just seen and just gone. Ouf! The plot thickens around me — I can struggle no more.

[*Sinks into a seat.*

Enter LUCY.

Who is there?

Lucy. But your child, my dear father.

Sir Geof. Child, ugh! what do you want?

Lucy. Ah, speak to me gently. It is your heart that I want!

Sir Geof. Heart — I suspect I'm to be coaxed out of something! — Eh; eh! Why she's weeping. What ails thee, poor darling?

Lucy. So kind. Now I have courage to tell you. I was sitting alone, and I thought to myself — "my father often doubts of me — doubts of all" —

Sir Geof. Ugh — what now?

Lucy. "Yet his true nature is generous — it could

not always have been so. Perhaps in old times he has been deceived where he loved. Ah, his Lucy, at least, shall never deceive him." So I rose and listened for your footstep — I heard it — and I am here — here, on your bosom, my own father!

Sir Geof. You'll never deceive me — right, right — go on, pretty one, go on. [Aside. If she should be my child after all?]

Lucy. There is one who has come here lately — one who appears to displease you — one whom you've been led to believe comes not on my account, but my friend's. It is not so, my father; it is for me that he comes. Let him come no more — let me see him no more — for — for — I feel that his presence might make me too happy — and that would grieve you, O my father!

[Mask appears at the window watching.

Sir Geof. [Aside. She must be my child! Bless her!] I'll never doubt you again. I'll bite out my tongue if it says a harsh word to you. I'm not so bad as I seem. Grieve me? — yes, it would break my heart. You don't know these gay courtiers — I do! — tut — tut — tut — don't cry. How can I console her?

Lucy. Shall I say? — let me speak to you of my mother.

Sir Geof. [recoiling.] Ah!

Lucy. Would it not soothe you to hear that a friend of hers was in London, who —

Sir Geof. [rising, and a change in his whole deport-

*ment]. I forbid you to speak to me of your mother,
— she dishonoured me —*

Mask [in a low voice of emotion]. It is false!

[*Mask disappears.*

Sir Geof. [starting]. Did you say "false?"

Lucy [sobbing]. No — no — but my heart said it!

Sir Geof. Strange; or was it but my own fancy?

*Lucy. Oh, father, father! — How I shall pity you
if you discover that your suspicions erred. And again
I say — I feel — feel in my heart of woman — that
the mother of the child who so loves and honours you,
was innocent.*

Hardman's voice without. Is Sir Geoffrey at home?

[*Lucy starts up, and exit. — Twilight — during the
preceding dialogue in the scene, the stage has gradually
darkened.*

Enter HARDMAN.

*Hard. Sir Geoffrey, you were deceived; Lord
Wilmot has no thought of Mr. Easy's daughter.*

*Sir Geof. I know that — Lucy has told me all,
and begged me not to let him come here again.*

*Hard. [joyfully]. She has! Then she does not
love this Lord Wilmot? — But still be on your guard
against him. Remember the arts of corruption — the
emissary — the letter — the go-between — the spy!*

*Sir Geof. Arts! Spy! Ha! if Easy was right after
all. If those flowers thrown in at the window; the
watch from that house in the lane; the masked figure
that followed me; all bode designs but on Lucy —*

Hard. Flowers have been thrown in at the window? You've been watched? A masked figure has followed you? One question more. All this since Lord Wilmot knew Lucy?

Sir Geof. Yes, to be sure; how blind I have been!

[*Masked figure appears.*

Hard. Ha! look yonder! Let me track this mystery [*Figure disappears*]: and if it conceal a scheme of Lord Wilmot's against your daughter's honour, it shall need not your sword to protect her. [Leaps from the window.

Sir Geof. What does he mean? Not *my* sword? Zounds! he don't think of his own! If he does, I'll discard him. I'm not a coward, to let other men risk their lives in my quarrel. Served as a volunteer under Marlbro', at Blenheim; and marched on a cannon! Whatever my faults, no one can say I'm not brave. [Starting.] Ha! bless my life! What is that? I thought I heard something — I'm all on a tremble! Who the deuce *can* be brave when he's surrounded by poisoners — followed by phantoms; with an ugly black face peering in at his window? — Hodge, come and bar up the shutters — lock the door — let out the house-dog! Hodge! Hodge! Where on earth is that scoundrel?

[*Exit*

SCENE III.

The Streets — in perspective, an Alley inscribed Deadman's Lane — a large, old-fashioned, gloomy House in the Corner, with the door on the stage, above which is impanelled a sign of the Crown and Portcullis. Enter a Female Figure, masked — looks round, pauses, and enters the door. — Dark — Lights down.

Enter HARDMAN.

Hard. Ha! enters that house. I have my hand on the clue! some pretext to call on the morrow, and I shall quickly unravel the skein. [Exit.

Goodenough Easy [singing without]. —

"Old King Cole
Was a jolly old soul,
And a jolly old soul was he —

[Entering, with LORD WILMOT and SOFTHEAD, EASY, his dress disordered, a pipe in his mouth, in a state of intoxication, hilarious, musical, and oratorical — SOFTHEAD in a state of intoxication, abject, remorseful, and lachrymose — WILMOT sober, but affecting ineptiety.

"He called for his pipe, and he called for his bowl,
And he called for his fiddlers three."

Wil. Ha, ha! I imagine myself like Bacchus between Silenus and his — ass!

Easy. Wilmot, you're a jolly old soul, and I'll give you my Barbara.

Soft. [blubbering]. Hegh! hegh! hegh! Betrayed
in my tenderest affections.

Wil. My dear Mr. Easy, I've told you already that
I'm pre-engaged.

Easy. Pre-engaged! that's devilish unhandsome!
But now I look at you, you do seem double: and if
you're double, you're not single; and if you're not
single, why you can't marry Barbara, for that would
be bigamy! But I don't care; you're a jolly old
soul!

Wil. Not a bit of it. Quite mistaken, Mr. Easy.
But if you want, for a son-in-law, a jolly old soul —
there he is!

Soft. [bursting out afresh]. Hegh! hegh! hegh!

Easy. Hang a lord! What's a lord? I'm a
respectable, independent family Briton: — Softhead,
give us your fist: you're a jolly old soul, and *you* shall
have Barbara!

Soft. Hegh! hegh! I'm not a jolly old soul.
I'm a sinful, wicked, miserable monster. Hegh!
hegh!

Easy. What's a monster? I like a monster!
My girl shan't go a-begging any farther. You're
a precious good fellow, and your father's an alder-
man, and has got a great many votes, and I'll
stand for the City: and *you shall* have my
Barbara.

Soft. I don't deserve her, Mr. Easy; I don't de-
serve such an angel! I'm not precious good. Lords

and tigers have corrupted my innocence. Hegh! hegh! I'm going to be hanged.

Watch. [without.] Half-past eight o'clock!

Wil. Come along, gentlemen; we shall have the watch on us!

Easy. —

"And the bands that guard the City,
Cried — 'Rebels, yield or die!'"

Enter Watchman.

Watch. Half-past eight o'clock! — move on!
move on!

Easy. Order, order! Mr. Vice and gentlemen, here's a stranger disturbing the harmony of the evening. I knock him down for a song. [Seizes the Watchman's rattle.] Half-past Eight, Esq., on his legs! Sing, sir; I knock you down for a song.

Watch. Help! help! Watch! watch!

[*Cries within,* "Watch!"

Soft. Hark! the officers of justice! My wicked career is approaching its close!

Easy [who has got astride on the Watchman's head, and persuades himself that the rest of the Watchman is the table.] Mr. Vice and gentlemen, the toast of the evening — what's the matter with the table? 'Tis bobbing up and down. The table's drunk! Order for the chair — you table, you! [Thumps the Watchman with the rattle.] Fill your glasses — a bumper toast. Prosperity to the City of London — nine times nine — Hip, hip, hurrah! [Waves the rattle over his head;

the rattle springs, and makes all the noise of which rattles are capable.] [Amazed.] Why, the Chairman's hammer is as drunk as the table!

Enter Watchmen with staves, springing their rattles.

Wil. [drawing SOFTHEAD off into a corner]. Hold your tongue — they'll not see us here!

Watch. [escaping]. Murder! — murder! — this is the fellow! — most desperate ruffian.

[*EASY is upset by the escape of the Watchman, and, after some effort to remove him otherwise, the Guardians of the Night hoist him on their shoulders.*

Easy. I'm being chaired member for the City! Freemen and Electors! For this elevation to the post of member for your metropolis, I return you my heartfelt thanks! Steady there, steady! The proudest day of my life. — 'Tis the boast of the British Constitution that a plain, sober man like me may rise to honours the most exalted! Long live the British Constitution. Hip — hip — hurrah!

[*Is carried off waving the rattle. SOFTHEAD continues to weep in speechless sorrow.*

Wil. [coming forth.] Ha! ha! ha! — My family Briton being chaired for the City! “So severe on a cheerful glass.” Well, he has chosen a son-in-law drunk; and, egad! he shall keep to him sober! Stand up; how do you feel?

Soft. *Feel!* I'm a ruin!

Wil. Faith, I never saw a more mournful one! It must be near Sir Geoffrey's! — Led them here — on my way to this sepulchral appointment, Deadman's Lane. Where the plague can it be? Ha! the very place. Looks like it! How get rid of Softhead. — Ha! ha! I have it. Softhead, awake! the night has begun — the time for monsters and their prey. Now will I lift the dark veil from the mysteries of London. Behold that house, Deadman's Lane!

Soft. Deadman's Lane! I'm in a cold perspiration!

Wil. In that house — under the antique sign of Crown and Portcullis — are such delightful horrors at work as would make the wigs of holy men stand on end! The adventure is dangerous, but deliriously exciting. Into that abode which woman were lost did she enter, which man is oft hanged when he leaves — into that abode will we plunge, and gaze, like Macbeth, "on deeds without a name."

Enter Masked Figure from the door in Deadman's Lane, and approaches WILMOT, who has, till now, hold of SOFTHEAD.

Soft. Hegh! hegh! hegh! I won't gaze on deeds without a name! I won't plunge into Deadmen's abodes! [Perceiving the figure.] Ha! Look there! Dark veil, indeed! Mysteries of London! Horrible apparition, avaunt! [Breaks from WILMOT, who releases him here, and not till now, as he sees the figure.] Hegh! hegh! I'll go home to my mother. [Exit.]

Mask motions to WILMOT, who follows her into the house.]

[*Exeunt Mask and WILMOT within the house.*]

ACT IV. — SCENE I.

The Library in Sir GEOFFREY's house.

HARDMAN and SIR GEOFFREY.

Sir Geof. Yes! I've seen that you're not indifferent to Lucy. But before I approve or discourage, just tell me more of yourself, — your birth, your fortune, past life. Of course, you are the son of a gentleman? [Aside.] Now as he speaks truly or falsely I will discard him as a liar, or reward him with Lucy's hand. — He turns aside. He will lie!

Hard. Sir, at the risk of my hopes, I will speak the hard truth. "The son of a gentleman!" I think not. My infancy passed in the house of a farmer; the children with whom I played told me I was an orphan. I was next dropped, how I know not, in the midst of that rough world called school. "You have talent," said the master, "but you're idle; you have no right to holidays; you must force your way through life; you are sent here by charity."

Sir. Geof. Charity! There, the old fool was wrong!

Hard. My idleness vanished — I became the head of the school. Then I resolved no longer to

be the pupil of — Charity. At the age of sixteen I escaped, and took for my motto — the words of the master — "You must force your way through life." Hope and pride whispered — "You'll force it!"

Sir Geof. Poor fellow! What then?

Hard. Eight years of wandering, adventure, hardship, and trial. I often wanted bread — never courage. At the end of those years I had risen — to what? A desk at a lawyer's office in Norfolk. —

Sir. Geof. [Aside.] My own lawyer? where I first caught trace of him again.

Hard. Party spirit ran high in town. Politics began to bewitch me. There was a Speaking Club, and I spoke. My ambition rose higher — took the flight of an author. I came up to London with ten pounds in my pocket, and a work on the "State of the Nation." It sold well; the publisher brought me four hundred pounds. "Vast fortunes," said he, "are made in the South Sea Scheme. Venture your hundreds, — I'll send you a broker —"

Sir. Geof. He! he! I hope he was clever, that broker?

Hard. Clever indeed: in a fortnight he said to me, "Your hundreds have swelled into thousands. For this money I can get you an Annuity on land, just enough for a parliamentary qualification." The last hint fired me — I bought the Annuity. You now know my fortune, and how it was made.

Sir. Geof. [Aside.] He! he! I must tell this to Easy: how he'll enjoy it.

Hard. Not long after, at a political coffee-house, a man took me aside. "Sir," said he, "you are Mr. Hardman who wrote the famous work on 'The State of the Nation.' Will you come into Parliament? We want a man like you for our borough; we'll return you free of expense; not a shilling of bribery."

Sir Geof. He! he! Wonderful! not a shilling of bribery.

Hard. The man kept his word, and I came into Parliament — inexperienced and friendless. I spoke, and was laughed at; spoke again, and was listened to; failed often; succeeded at last. Here, yesterday, in ending my tale I must have said, looking down, "Can you give your child to a man of birth more than doubtful; and of fortunes so humble?" Yet aspiring even then to the hand of your heiress, I wrote to Sir Robert for a place just vacated by a man of high rank, who is raised to the peerage. He refused.

Sir Geof. Of course. *[Aside.]* I suspect he's very rash and presuming.

Hard. To-day the refusal is retracted — the office is mine.

Sir Geof. [astonished and aside.] Ha! I had no hand in that!

Hard. I am now one — if not of the highest — yet still *one* of that Government through which the Majesty of England administers her laws. And, with

front erect, I say to you — as I would to the first peer of the realm — “I have no charts of broad lands, and no roll of proud fathers. But alone and unfriended, I have fought my way against Fortune. Did your ancestors more? My country has trusted the new man to her councils, and the man whom she honours is the equal of all.”

Sir Geof. Brave fellow, your hand. Win Lucy's consent, and you have mine. Hush! no thanks! Now listen; I have told you my dark story — these flowers cannot come from Wilmot. I have examined them again — they are made up in the very form of the posies I had the folly to send, in the days of our courtship, to the wife who afterwards betrayed me —

Hard. Be not so sure that she betrayed. No proof but the boast of a profligate.

Sir Geof. Who had been my intimate friend for years — so that, O torture! I am haunted with the doubt whether my heiress be my own child! and to whom (by the confession of a servant) she sent a letter in secret the very day on which I struck the mocking boast from the villain's lips, in a public tavern. Ah, he was always a wit and a scoffer — perhaps it is from him that these flowers are sent, in token of gibe and insult. He has discovered the man he dishonoured, in spite of the change of name —

Hard. You changed your name for an inheritance. You have not told me that which you formerly bore.

Sir Geof. Morland?

Hard. Morland — Ha — and the seducer's --

Sir Geof. Lord Henry de Mowbray —

Hard. The reprobate brother of the Duke of Middlesex! He died a few months since.

Sir Geof. [sinking down]. Died too! Both dead!

Hard. [Aside]. Tonson spoke of Lord Henry's Memoir — Confession about Lady Morland in Fallen's hands. — I will go to Fallen at once. [Aloud.] You haven given me a new clue. I will follow it up. — When can I see you again?

Sir Geof. I'm going to Easy's — you'll find me there all the morning. But don't forget Lucy, — we must save her from Wilmot.

Hard. Fear Wilmot no more. — This day he shall abandon his suit. [Exit HARDMAN.

Sir Geof. Hodge! — Well — well —

Enter HODGE.

— Hodge, take your hat and your bludgeon — attend me to the City. [Aside.] She'll be happy with Hardman. Ah! if she were my own child after all!

[*Exeunt SIR GEOFFREY and HODGE.*

SCENE II.

DAVID FALLEN'S Garret. *The scene resembling that of Hogarth's "Distrest Poet."*

Fal. [opening the casement]. So, the morning air breathes fresh! One moment's respite from drudgery.

Another line to this poem, my grand bequest to my country! Ah! this description; unfinished; good, good.

"Methinks we walk in dreams on fairy land
Where — golden ore — lies mix'd with —"*

Enter PADDY.

Paddy. Please, sir, the milkwoman's score!

Fal. Stay, stay; —

"Lies mixed with — common sand!"

Eh? Milkwoman? She must be paid, or the children — I — I — [Fumbling in his pocket, and looking about the table]. There's another blanket on the bed; pawn it.

Paddy. Agh, now! don't be so ungrateful to your ould friend, the blanket. When Mr. Tonson, the great book-shiller, tould me, says he, "Paddy, I'd giv two hunder gould guineas for the papursh Mr. Fallen has in his disk!"

Fal. Go, go!

[Knock.

Paddy. Agh, murther! Who can that be disturbin' the door at the top of the mornin'? [Exit.

Fal. Oh! that fatal Memoir! My own labours scarce keep me from starving, and this wretched scrawl of a profligate worth what to me were Golconda! Heaven sustain me! I'm tempted.

* As it would be obviously presumptuous to assign to an author so eminent as Mr. David Fallen, any verses composed by a living writer, the two lines in the text are taken from Mr. Dryden's *Indian Emperor*.

Enter PADDY, and WILMOT disguised as EDMUND CURLL.

Paddy. Stoop your head, sir. 'Tis not a dun, sir; 'tis Mr. Curll; says he's come to outbid Mr. Tonson, sir.

Fal. Go quick; pawn the blanket. Let me think my children are fed. [*Exit PADDY.*] Now, sir, what do you want?

Wil. [taking out his handkerchief and whimpering]. My dear good Mr. Fallen — no offence — I do so feel for the distresses of genius. I am a bookseller, but I have a heart — and I'm come to buy —

Fal. Have you? this poem? it is nearly finished — twelve books — twenty years' labour — twenty-four thousand lines! — ten pounds, Mr. Curll, ten pounds?

Wil. Price of *Paradise Lost!* Can't expect such prices for poetry now-a-days, my dear Mr. Fallen. Nothing takes that is not sharp and spicy. Hum! I hear you have some most interesting papers; private Memoirs and Confessions of a Man of Quality recently deceased. Nay, nay, Mr. Fallen! don't shrink back; I'm not like that shabby dog, Tonson. Three hundred guineas for the Memoir of Lord Henry de Mowbray.

Fal. Three hundred guineas for that garbage! — not ten for the Poem! — and — the children! Well! [*Takes out the Memoir in a portfolio, splendidly bound, with the arms and supporters of the Mowbrays blazoned on the sides.*] Ah! — but the honour of a woman — the secrets of a family — the —

Wil. [grasping at the portfolio which FALLEN still detains.] Nothing sells better, my dear, dear Mr. Fallen! But how, how did you come by these treasures, my excellent friend?

Fal. How? Lord Henry gave them to me himself, on his death-bed.

Wil. Nay; what could he give them for, but to publish, my sweet Mr. Fallen; no doubt to immortalize all the ladies who loved him.

Fal. No, sir; profligate as he was, and vile as may be much in this Memoir, that was not his dying intention, though it might be his first. There was a lady he had once foully injured — the sole woman he had ever loved eno' for remorse. This Memoir contains a confession that might serve to clear the name he himself had aspersed, and in the sudden repentance of his last moments, he bade me seek the lady, and place the whole in her hands, to use as best might serve to establish her innocence.

Wil. How could you know the lady, my benevolent friend?

Fal. I did not; but she was supposed to be abroad with her father, — a Jacobite exile, — and I, then a Jacobite agent, had the best chance to trace her.

Wil. And you did?

Fal. But to hear she had died somewhere in France.

Wil. Then, of course you may now gratify our intelligent Public, for your own personal profit. Clear as day, my magnanimous friend! Three hundred guineas! I have 'em here in a bag!

Fal. Begone! I will not sell man's hearth to the public.

Wil. [Aside. Noble fellow!] Gently, gently, my too warm, but high-spirited friend! To say the truth, I don't come on my own account. To whom, my dear sir, since the lady is dead, *should* be given these papers, if unfit for a virtuous, but inquisitive public? Why, surely to Lord Henry's nearest relation. I am employed by the rich Duke of Middlesex. Name your terms.

Fal. Ha! ha! Then at last he comes crawling to me, your proud Duke? Sir, years ago, when a kind word from his Grace, a nod of his head, a touch of his hand, would have turned my foes into flatterers, I had the meanness to name him my patron — inscribed to him a work, took it to his house, and waited in his hall among porters and lackeys — till, sweeping by to his carriage, he said, "Oh! you are the poet? take this," — and extending his alms, as if to a beggar. "You look very thin, sir; stay and dine with my people." People — his servants!

Wil. Calm yourself, my good Mr Fallen! 'tis his Grace's innocent way with us all.

Fal. Go! let him know what these Memoirs contain! They would make the proud Duke the butt of the town — the jeer of the lackeys, who jeered at my rags; expose his frailties, his follies, his personal secrets. Tell him this; and then say that my poverty shall not be the tool of his brother's revenge: but my pride shall not stoop from its pedestal to take money from

him. Now, sir, am I right? Reply, not as tempter to pauper; but if one spark of manhood be in you, as man speaks to man.

Wil. [resuming his own manner]. I reply, sir, as man to man, and gentleman to gentleman. I am Frederick, Lord Wilmot. Pardon this imposture. The Duke is my father's friend. I am here to obtain, what it is clear that he alone should possess. Mr. Fallen, your works first raised me from the world of the senses, and taught me to believe in such nobleness as I now hope for in you. Give me this record to take to the Duke — no price, sir; for such things are priceless — and let me go hence with the sight of this poverty before my eyes, and on my soul the grand picture of the man who has spurned the bribe to his honour, and can humble by a gift the great prince who insulted him by alms.

Fal. Take it — take it! [Gives the portfolio.] I am saved from temptation. God bless you, young man!

Wil. Now you indeed make me twofold your debtor — in your books, the rich thought; in yourself the heroic example. Accept from my superfluities, in small part of such debt, a yearly sum equal to that which your poverty refused as a bribe from Mr. Tonson.

Fal. My Lord — my Lord — [Bursts into tears.]

Wil. Oh, trust me the day shall come, when men will feel that it is not charity we owe to the ennoblers of life — it is tribute! When your Order shall rise with the civilization it called into being; and shall refer its claim to just rank among freemen, to some

Queen whom even a Milton might have sung, and even a Hampden have died for.

Fal. O dream of my youth! My heart swells and shakes me!

Enter HARDMAN.

Hard. What's this? Fallen weeping? — Ah! is not that the tyrannical sneak, Edmund Curril? —

Wil. [changing his tone to *FALLEN* into one of *imperiousness*]. Can't hear of the poem, Mr. Fallen. Don't tell me. Ah! Mr. Hardman [concealing the portfolio], your most humble! Sir — sir — if you want to publish something smart and spicy — Secret Anecdotes of Cabinets — Sir Robert Walpole's Adventures with the Ladies — I'll come down as handsomely as any man in the Row — smart and spicy —

Hard. Offer to bribe *me*, you insolent rascal!

Wil. Oh, my dear good Mr. Hardman, I've bribed the Premier himself. Ha! ha! Servant, sir; servant.

[*Exit.*

Hard. Loathsome vagabond! My dear Mr. Fallen, you have the manuscript Memoir of Lord Henry de Mowbray. I know its great value. Name your own price to permit me just to inspect it.

Fal. It is gone; and to the hands of his brother, the Duke.

Hard. The Duke! This is a thunder-stroke! Say, sir: you have read this Memoir — does it contain aught respecting a certain Lady Morland?

Fal. It does. It confesses that Lord Henry slandered her reputation as woman in order to sustain his own

as a seducer. That part of the Memoir was writ on his death-bed.

Hard. His boast, then —

Fal. Was caused by the scorn of her letter rejecting his suit.

Hard. What joy for Sir Geoffrey! And that letter?

Fal. Is one of the documents that make up the Memoir.

Hard. And these documents are now in the hands of the Duke!

Fal. They are. For, since Lady Morland is dead —

Hard. Are you sure she is dead?

Fal. I only go by report —

Hard. Report often lies. [*Aside.* Who *but* Lady Morland can this mask be? I will go at once to the house and clear up that doubt myself. But the Duke's appointment! Ah, that must not be forgotten; my rival must be removed ere Lucy can be won. And what hold on the Duke himself to produce the Memoir, if I get the despatch.] Well, Mr. Fallen, there is no more to be said as to the Memoir. Your Messenger will meet his Grace, as we settled. I shall be close at hand; and mark! the messenger must give me the despatch which is meant for the Pretender.

[*Exit HARDMAN.*

Enter PADDY.

Paddy. Plase, sur, an' I've paid the milk-score —

Fal. [*interrupting him*]. I'm to be rich — so rich! 'Tis my turn now. I've shared your pittance, you shall share my plenty!

[*Scene closes.*

SCENE III.

The Mall.

*Enter Softhead, his arms folded, and in deep thought.
He is forming a virtuous resolution.*

Soft. Little did I foresee, in the days of my innocence, when Mr. Lillo read to me his affecting tragedy of George Barnwell,* how I myself was to be led on, step by step, to the brink of deeds without a name. Deadman's Lane! — that funereal apparition in black! — a warning to startle the most obdurate conscience!

*Enter Easy, recently dismissed from the Watch-house;
slovenly, skulking, and crestfallen.*

Easy. Not a coach on the stand! A pretty pickle I'm in if any one sees me! A sober, respectable man like me, to wake in the watch-house, be kept there till noon among thieves and pickpockets, and at last to be fined five shillings for drunkenness and disorderly conduct; all from dining with a lord who had no thoughts of making Barbara my Lady after all! — Deuce take him!

Easy [discovering Softhead]. Softhead! how shall I escape him?

* We have only, I fear, Mr. Softhead's authority for supposing *George Barnwell* to be then written: it was not acted till some years afterwards.

Soft. [discovering EASY]. Easy! WHAT A FALL! I'll appear not to remember. Barbara's father should not feel degraded in the eyes of a wretch like myself! How d'ye do, Mr. Easy? You're out early to-day.

Easy. [Aside.] Ha! He was so drunk himself he has forgotten all about it.] Yes, a headache. You were so pleasant at dinner. I wanted the air of the park.

Soft. Why, you look rather poorly, Mr. Easy!

Easy. Indeed, I feel so. A man in business can't afford to be laid up — so I thought, before I went home to the City, that I'd just look into — Ha, ha, a seasoned toper like you will laugh when I tell you — I thought I'd just look into the 'pothecary's!

Soft. Just been there myself, Mr. Easy.

[Showing a phial,

Easy [regarding it with mournful disgust.] Not taken physic since I was a boy! It looks very nasty!

Soft. 'Tis worse than it looks! And this is called Pleasure! Ah! Mr. Easy, don't give way to Fred's fascination; you don't know how it ends.

Easy. Indeed I do [Aside. It ends in the watch-house]. And I'm shocked to think what will become of yourself, if you are thus every night led away by a lord, who —

Soft. Hush! talk of the devil — look! he's coming up the Mall!

Easy. He is? then I'm off; I see a sedan-chair. Chair! chair! stop! — chair! chair! [Exit.

Enter WILMOT and DUKE.

Duke [looking at portfolio]. Infamous indeed! His own base lie against that poor lady, whose husband he wounded. Her very letter attached to it. Ha! — what is this? — Such ribaldry on me! Gracious Heaven! My name thus dragged through the dirt, and by a son of my house! Oh, my Lord, how shall I thank you?

Wil. Thank not me; but the poet, whom your Grace left in the hall.

Duke. Name it not — I'll beg his pardon myself! Adieu; I must go home and lock up this scandal till I've leisure to read and destroy it; never again shall it come to the day! And then, sure that no blot shall be seen in my 'scutcheon, I can peril my life without fear in the cause of my king. [Exit DUKE.

Wil. [chanting].

"Gather you rosebuds while you may.
For time is still a-flying."

Since my visit last night to Deadman's Lane, and my hope to give Lucy such happiness, I feel as if I trod upon air. Ah, Softhead! why, you stand there as languid and lifeless, as if you were capable of — fishing!

Soft. I've been thinking —

Wil. Thinking! you do look fatigued! What a horrid exertion it must have been to you!

Soft. Ah! Fred, Fred, don't be so hardened. What atrocity did you perpetrate last night?

Wil. Last night? Oh, at Deadman's Lane: monstrous, indeed. And this morning, too, another! Never had so many atrocities on my hands as within the last twenty-four hours. But they are all nothing to that which I perpetrated yesterday, just before dinner. Hark! I bribed the Prime Minister.

Soft. Saints in Heaven!

Wil. Ha! ha! Hit him plump on the jolly blunt side of his character! I must tell you about it. Drove home from Will's; put my Murillo in the carriage, and off to Sir Robert's — shown into his office, — "Ah! my Lord Wilmot," says he, with that merry roll of his eye; "this *is* an honour, what can I do for you?" — "Sir Robert," says I, "we men of the world soon come to the point; 'tis a maxim of yours that all have their price." — "Not quite that," says Sir Robert, "but let us suppose that it is." Another roll of his eye, as much as to say, "I shall get this rogue a bargain!" — "So, Sir Robert," quoth I, with a bow, "I've come to buy the Prime Minister" — "Buy me," cried Sir Robert, and he laughed till I thought he'd have choked; "my price is rather high, I'm afraid." Then I go to the door, bid my lackeys bring in the Murillo. "Look at that, if you please; about the mark, is it not?" Sir Robert runs to the picture, his breast heaves, his eyes sparkle: "A Murillo!" cries he, "name your price!" — "I have named it." Then he looks at me *so*, and I look at him *so!* — turn out the lackeys, place pen, ink, and paper before him; "That place in the Treasury just vacant, and the Murillo is yours," — "For your-

self? — I am charmed," cried Sir Robert. "No, 'tis for a friend of your own, who's in want of it." — "Oh, that alters the case: I've so many friends troubled with the same sort of want" — "Yes, but the Murillo is *genuine*, — pray what are the friends?" Out laughed Sir Robert, "There's no resisting you and the Murillo together! There's the appointment. And now, since your Lordship has bought me, I must insist upon buying your Lordship. Fair play is a jewel." Then I take my grand holiday air: "Sir Robert," said I, "you've bought me long ago! you've given us peace where we feared civil war; and a Constitutional King instead of a despot. And if that's not enough to buy the vote of an Englishman, believe me, Sir Robert, he's not worth the buying." Then he stretched out his bluff hearty hand, and I gave it a bluff hearty shake. He got the Murillo — Hardman the place. And here stand I, the only man in all England, who can boast that he bought the Prime Minister! Faith, you may well call me hardened: I don't feel the least bit of remorse.

Soft. Hardman! you got Hardman the place?

Wil. I did not say Hardman —

Soft. You did say Hardman. But as 'tis a secret that might get you into trouble, I'll keep it. — Yet, *Dimidum meæ*, that's not behaving much like a monster?

Wil. Why, it does seem betraying the Good Old Cause; — but if there's honour among thieves, there is among monsters; and Hardman is in the same scrape

as ourselves — in love; — this place may secure him the hand of the lady. But mind — he's not to know I've been meddling with his affairs. Hang it! no one likes that. Not a word then —

Soft. Not a word. My dear Fred, I'm so glad you're not so bad as you seem. I'd half a mind to desert you; but I have not the heart; and I'll stick by you as long as I live!

Wil. [aside]. Whew! This will never do! Poor dear little fellow! I'm sorry to lose him; but my word's passed to Barbara; and 'tis all for his good. *[Aloud.]* As long as you live? Alas! that reminds me of your little affair. I'm to be your second, you know.

Soft. Second! — affair!

Wil. With that fierce Colonel Flint. I warned you against him; but you have such a deuce of a spirit. Don't you remember?

Soft. No; why, what was it all about?

Wil. Let me see — oh, Flint said something insolent about Mistress Barbara.

Soft. He did? — Ruffian!

Wil. So — you called him out! But if you'll empower me in your name to retract and apologize —

Soft. Not a bit of it. Insolent to Barbara! *Dimidum meæ.* I'd fight him if he were the first swordsman in England.

Wil. Why, that's just what he is!

Soft. Don't care; I'm his man — though a dead one.

Wil. [Aside. Hang it — he's as brave as myself, on that side of his character. I must turn to another.] No, Softhead, that was not the cause of the quarrel — said it to rouse you, as you seemed rather low. The fact is that it was a jest on yourself, that you took up rather warmly.

Soft. Was that all — only myself?

Wil. No larger subject; and Flint is *such* a good fencer!

Soft. My dear Fred; I retract, I apologize; I despise duelling — absurd and unchristianlike.

Wil. Leave all to me. Dismiss the subject. I'll settle it; only, Softhead, you see our set has very stiff rules on such matters. And if you apologize to a bravo like Flint; nay, if you don't actually, cheerfully, rapturously fight him — though sure to be killed — I fear you must resign all ideas of high life!

Soft. *Dimidum meæ,* but low life is better than no life at all!

Wil. There's no denying that proposition. It will console you to think that Mr. Easy's kind side is Cheapside. And you may get upon one, if you return to the other.

Soft. I was thinking so, when you found me — *thinking* [hesitatingly] — But to leave you —

Wil. Oh, not yet! Retire at least with *éclat*. Share with me one grand, crowning, last, daring, and desperate adventure.

Soft. Deadman's Lane again, I suppose? I thank you for nothing. Fred, I have long been your faithful

follower. [With emotion.] Now, my Lord, I'm your humble servant.* [Aside. Barbara will comfort me. She's perhaps at Sir Geoffrey's.] [Exit.]

Wil. Well! his love will repay him, and the City of London will present me with her freedom, in a gold box for restoring her prodigal son to her Metropolitan bosom. Deadman's Lane — that was an adventure, indeed. Lucy's mother still living — implores me to get her the sight of her child. Will Lucy believe me? Will —

Enter SMART.

— Ha, Smart? Well — Well? — You — baffled Sir Geoffrey?

Smart. He was out.

Wil. And you gave the young lady my letter?

Smart. Hist! my Lord, it so affected her — that — here she comes. [Exit SMART.]

Enter LUCY.

Lucy. Oh, my Lord, is this true? Can it be? A mother lives! Do you wonder that I forget all else? — that I am here — and with but one prayer, lead me to that mother! She says, too, she has been slandered — blesses me — that my heart defended her, but — but — this is no snare — you do not deceive me?

Wil. Deceive you! Oh, Lucy — I have a sister myself at the hearth of my father.

Lucy. Forgive me — lead on — quick, quick — oh, mother, mother! [Exeunt LUCY and WILMOT.]

* A play upon words plagiarised from Farquhar. The reader must regret that the author had not the courage to plagiarise more from Farquhar.

ACT V. — SCENE I.

Old Mill near the Thames.

Enter HARDMAN.

Hard. The despatch to the Pretender [*opening it*]. Ho! Wilmot is in my power; here ends his rivalry. The Duke's life, too, in exchange for the Memoir? No! Fear is not his weak point; but how can this haughtiest of men ever yield such memorials? Even admit the base lie of his brother? Still her story has that which may touch him. Since I have seen her, I feel sure of her innocence. The Duke comes; now all depends on my chance to hit the right side of a character.

Enter DUKE OF MIDDLESEX.

Duke. Lord Loftus not here yet! Strange!

Hard. My Lord Duke — forgive this intrusion!

Duke. T'other man I met at Lord Wilmot's. Sir, your servant; I'm somewhat in haste.

Hard. Still I presume to delay your Grace; for it is on a question of honour!

Duke. Honour! that goes before all! Sir, my time is your own.

Hard. Your Grace is the head of a house, whose fame is a part of our history; it is therefore that I speak to you boldly, since it may be that wrongs were inflicted by one of its members --

Duke. How, sir!

Hard. Assured that if so (and should it be still in your power), your Grace will frankly repair them, as a duty you took with the ermine and coronet.

Duke. You speak well, sir. — [*Aside.* Very much like a gentleman!]

Hard. Your Grace had a brother, Lord Henry de Mowbray.

Duke. Ah! Sir, to the point.

Hard. At once, my Lord Duke. Many years ago a duel took place between Lord Henry and Sir Geoffrey Morland — your Grace knows the cause.

Duke. Hem! yes; a lady — who — who —

Hard. Was banished her husband's home, and her infant's cradle, on account of suspicions based, my Lord Duke, on — what your Grace cannot wonder that the husband believed — the word of a Mowbray!

Duke. [*Aside.* Villain!] But what became of the husband, never since heard of? He —

Hard. Fled abroad from men's tongues, and dis honour. He did not return to his native land, till he had changed for another the name that a Mowbray had blighted. Unhappy man! he lives still.

Duke. And the lady — the lady —

Hard. Before the duel, had gone to the house of

her father, who was forced that very day to fly the country. His life was in danger.

Duke. How?

Hard. He was loyal to the Stuarts, and — a Plot was discovered.

Duke. Brave, noble gentleman! Go on, sir.

Hard. Her other ties wrenched from her, his daughter went with him into exile — his stay, his hope, his all. His lands were confiscated. She was high-born: she worked for a father's bread. Conceive yourself, my Lord Duke, in the place of that father — loyal and penniless; noble; proscribed; dependent on the toils of a daughter; and that daughter's name sullied by —

Duke. A word? —

Hard. From the son of that house to which all the chivalry of England looked for example.

Duke. [Aside. Oh, Heaven; can my glory thus be turned to my shame?] But they said she had died, sir.

Hard. When her father had gone to the grave, she herself spread or sanctioned that rumour — for she resolved to die to the world. She entered a convent, prepared to take the novitiate — when she suddenly learned that a person had been inquiring for her at Paris, who stated that Lord Henry de Mowbray had left behind him a Memoir —

Duke. Ah!

Hard. Which acquits her. She learned, too, the clue to her husband — resolved to come hither — ar-

rived six days since. No proof of her innocence save those for which I now appeal to your Grace!

Duke. O pride, be my succour! [Haughtily.] Appeal to me, sir, and wherefore?

Hard. The sole evidence alleged against this lady are the fact of a letter sent from herself to Lord Henry, and the boast of a man now no more. She asserts that that letter would establish her innocence. She believes that, on his deathbed, your brother retracted his boast; and that the Memoir he left will attest to its falsehood.

Duke. Asserts — believes — go on — go on.

Hard. No, my Lord Duke, I have done. I know that that letter, that Memoir exist; that they are now in your hands. If her assertion be false — if they prove not her innocence — a word, nay, a sign, from the chief of a house so renowned for its honour, suffices. I take my leave, and condemn her. But if her story be true, you have heard the last chance of a wife and a mother to be restored to the husband she loves and forgives, to the child who has grown into womanhood remote from her care; and these blessings I pledged her my faith to obtain, if that letter, that Memoir, should prove that the boast was —

Duke. A lie, sir, a lie, a black lie! — the coward's worst crime — a lie on the fair name of a woman! Sir, this heat, perhaps, is unseemly; thus to brand my own brother! But if we, the peers of England, and the representatives of her gentlemen, can hear, can think, of vile things done, whoever the doer, with calm pulse

and cold heart — perish our titles; where would be the use of a Duke?

Hard. [aside]. A very bright side of his character.

Duke. Sir, you are right. The Memoir you speak of is in my hands; and with it, Lady Morland's own letter. Much in that Memoir relates to myself; and so galls all the pride I am said to possess, that not ten minutes since methought I had rather my duchy were forfeit than have exposed its contents to the pity or laugh of a stranger. I think no more of myself. A woman has appealed for her name to mine honour as a man. Now, sir, your commands?

Hard. No passage is needed, save that which acquires Lady Morland. Let the memoir still rest in your hands. Condescend but to bring it forthwith to my house; and may I hope that my Lord Loftus may accompany you — there is an affair of moment on which I would speak to you both.

Duke. Your address, sir; I will but return home for the documents, and proceed at once to your house. Hurry not; I will wait. Allow me to take your hand, sir. You know how to speak to the heart of a gentleman.
[Exit.

Hard. [aside]. Yet how ignorant we are of men's hearts till we see them lit up by a passion! This noble has made what is honour so clear to my eyes. Let me pause — let me think — let me choose! I feel as if I stood at the crisis of life.

Enter Softhead.

Soft. What have I seen! — Where go? — Whom consult? Oh, Mr. Hardman! You're a friend of Lord Wilmot's, of Sir Geoffrey's, of Lucy's?

Hard. Speak — quick — to the purpose.

Soft. On my way to Sir Geoffrey's, I passed by a house of the most villainous character. I dare not say how Wilmot himself has described it. [Earnestly.] Oh, sir, you know Wilmot! you know his sentiments on marriage. I saw Wilmot and Lucy Thornsidge enter that infamous house! — Deadman's Lane!

Hard. [aside]. Deadman's Lane? He takes her to the arms of her mother! forestalls my own plan, will reap my reward. Have I schemed, then, for him! No, by yon heavens!

Soft. I ran on to Sir Geoffrey's — he was out.

Hard. [who has been writing in his tablets, tears out a page]. Take this to Justice Kite's, hard by: he will send two special officers, placed at the door, Deadman's Lane, to wait my instructions. They must go instantly — arrive as soon as myself. Then hasten to Mr. Easy's: Sir Geoffrey is there. Break your news with precaution, and bring him straight to that house. Leave the rest to my care. Away with you; quick.

Soft. I know he will kill me! But I'm right. And when I'm right, — *Dimidum meæ!*

[Exit.]

Hard. Ho! ho! It is war! My choice is made.
I am armed at all points, and strike for the victory.

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.

Apartment in the house, Deadman's Lane, Crown and Port-cullis, very old fashioned and sombre, faded tapestry on the walls, high mantel-piece, with deep ingles; furniture rude and simple; general air of the room not mean, but forlorn, as of that in some house neglected and little inhabited since the days of Elizabeth; the tapestry, drawn aside at the back, shows a door into an inner room — Lucy and her mother. — WILMOT seated.

Lady Thorn. And you believe me. Dear child — this indeed is happiness. — Ah! if your cruel father —

Lucy. Hush — he will believe you, too.

Lady Thorn. No; I could not venture into his presence, without the proof that he had wronged me.

Wil. Oh, that I had known before what interest you had in this Memoir! — how can I recover it from the Duke! —

Lucy. You will — you must — dear — dear Lord Wilmot — you have restored me to my mother; restore my mother to her home.

Wil. Ah! — and this hand — would you withdraw it then?

Lucy. Never from him who reunites my parents.

Lady Thorn. Ha! — a voice without — steps!

Wil. If it should be Sir Geoffrey — in some rash violence he might — retire — quick — quick.

[*Exeunt LADY THORNSIDE and LUCY in the inner room.*]

Enter HARDMAN.

Hard. Alone! Where is Lucy, my lord?

Wil. In the next room with —

Hard. Her mother?

Wil. What! you know?

Hard. I know that between us two there is a strife, and I am come to decide it; you love Lucy Thorside.

Wil. Well! I told you so.

Hard. You told it, my Lord, to a rival. Ay, smile. You have wealth, rank, fashion, and wit; I have none of these, and I need them not. But I say to you — that ere the hand on this dial moves to that near point in time, your love will be hopeless and your suit be withdrawn.

Wil. The man's mad. Unless sir, you wish me to believe that my life hangs on your sword, I cannot quite comprehend why my love should go by your watch.

Hard. I command you, Lord Wilmot, to change this tone of levity: I command it in the name of a life which, I think, you prize more than your own; a life that is now in my hands. You told me to sound your father. I have not done so — I have detected —

Wil. Detected! Hold, sir! that word implies crime.

Hard. Ay, the crime of the great. History calls it
ZEAL. Law styles it HIGH TREASON.

Wil. What do I hear? Heavens! — my father! Sir,
your word is no proof?

Hard. But *this* is! [Producing the Requisition to the
Pretender.] 'Tis high treason, conspiring to levy arms
against the King on the throne — here called the
Usurper. High treason to promise to greet with banner
and trump a pretender — here called James the Third.
Such is the purport of the paper I hold — and here is
the name of your father.

Wil. [Aside]. Both are armed and alone.

[Locks the outer door by which he is standing.

Hard. [Aside]. So, I guess his intention. [Opens the
window and looks out.] Good, the officers are come.

Wil. What the law calls high-treason I know not;
what the honest call treason I know. Traitor, thou who
hast used the confidence of a son against the life of a
father, thou shalt not quit these walls with that life
in thy grasp — yield the proof thou hast plundered or
forged. [Seizes him.

Hard. 'St! the officers of justice are below; loose
thine hold, or the life thou demandest falls from these
hands into theirs!

Wil. [recoiling]. Foiled! Foiled! How act! what do?
And thy son set yon bloodhound on thy track, O my
father! Sir, you say you are my rival; I guess the terms
you now come to impose!

Hard. I impose no terms. What needs the demand?
Have you an option? I think better of you. We both

love the same woman; I have loved her a year, you a week; you have her father's dislike, I his consent. One must yield — why should I? Rude son of the people though I be, why must I be thrust from the sunshine because you cross my path as the fair and the high-born? What have I owed to your order or you?

Wil. To me, sir? Well, if to me you owed some slight favour, I should scorn at this moment to speak it.

Hard. I owe favour, the slightest to no man; 'tis my boast. Listen still, I schemed to save your father, not to injure. Had you rather this scroll had fallen into the hands of a spy? And now, if I place it in yours — save your name from attainder, your fortunes from confiscation, your father from the axe of the headsman — why should I ask terms? Would it be possible for you to say, "Sir, I thank you; and in return I would do my best to rob your life of the woman you love, and whom I have just known a week?" Could you, peer's son, and gentleman, thus reply, — when, if I know aught of this grand people of England, not a mechanic who walks thro' yon streets, from the loom to the hovel, but what would cry "Shame!" on such answer?

Wil. Sir, I cannot argue with, I cannot rival the man who has my father's life at his will, whether to offer it as a barter, or to yield it as a boon. Either way, rivalry between us is henceforth impossible. Fear mine no more! Give me the scroll — I depart.

Hard. [Aside. His manliness moves me!] Nay let me pray your permission to give it myself to your

father, and with such words as will save him, and others whose names are hereto attached, from such perilous hazards in future.

Wil. In this too I fear that you leave me no choice; I must trust as I may to your honour! but heed well if —

Hard. Menace not; you doubt, then, my honour?

Wil. [with suppressed passion]. Plainly, I do; our characters differ. I had held myself dishonoured for ever if our positions had been reversed, — if I had taken such confidence as was placed in you, — concealed the rivalry, — prepared the scheme, — timed the moment, — forced the condition in the guise of benefit. No, sir, no: that may be talent, it is not honour.

Hard. [Aside. This stings! scornful fool that he is, not to see that I was half relenting. And now I feel but the foe! How sting again? I will summon him back to witness himself my triumph.] Stay, my Lord! [Writing at the table.] You doubt that I should yield up the document to your father? Bring him hither at once! He is now at my house with the Duke of Middlesex: pray them both to come here, and give this note to the Duke. [With a smile.] You will do it, my Lord.

Wil. Ay, indeed, — and when my father is safe, I will try to think that I wronged you. [Aside. And not one parting word to — to — 'Sdeath — I am unmanned. Show such emotion to him — No, no! — And if I cannot watch over that gentle life, why the

angels will!] I — I go, sir, — fulfil the compact; I have paid the price. [Exit.

Hard. He loves her more than I thought for. But she? Does she love him? [Goes to the door.] Mistress Lucy!

[Leads forth LUCY.

Lucy. Lord Wilmot gone!

Hard. Nay, speak not of him. If ever he hoped that your father could have overcome a repugnance to his suit he is now compelled to resign that hope, and for ever [LUCY turns aside, and weeps quietly.] Let us speak of your parents — your mother —

Lucy. Oh, yes — my dear mother — I so love her already.

Hard. You have heard her tale! Would you restore her, no blot on her name, to the hearth of your father?

Lucy. Speak! — speak! — can it be so?

Hard. If it cost you some sacrifice?

Lucy. Life has none for an object thus holy.

Hard. Hear, and decide It is the wish of your father that I should ask for this hand —

Lucy. No! — no!

Hard. Is the sacrifice so hard? Wait and hear the atonement. You come from the stolen embrace of a mother; I will make that mother the pride of your home. You have yearned for the love of a father; I will break down the wall between yourself and his heart — I will dispel all the clouds that have darkened his life.

Lucy. You will — you will! O blessings upon you!

Hard. Those blessings this hand can confer!

Lucy. But — but — the heart — the heart — *that does not go with the hand.*

Hard. Later, it will. I only pray for a trial. I ask but to conquer that heart, not to break it. Your father will soon be here — every moment I expect him. He comes in the full force of suspicion — deeming you lured here by Wilmot — fearing (pardon the vile word) your dishonour. How explain? You cannot speak of your mother till I first prove her guiltless. Could they meet till I do, words would pass that would make even union hereafter too bitter to her pride as a woman. Give me the power at once to destroy suspicion, remove fear, delay other explanations. Let me speak — let me act as your betrothed, your accepted. Hark! voices below — your father comes! — I have no time to plead; excuse what is harsh — seems ungenerous —

Sir Geof. [without]. Out of my way! — loose my sword!

Lucy. Oh save my mother! — Let him not see my mother.

Hard. Grant me this trial — pledge this hand now — retract hereafter if you will. Your mother's name — your parents' reunion! Ay or no! — will you pledge it?

Lucy. Can you doubt their child's answer? I pledge it!

Enter SIR GEOFFREY, struggling from EASY, SOFTHEAD, BARBARA.

Sir Geof. Where is he? where is this villain? let me get at him! What, what, gone? [Falling on HARDMAN's breast.] Oh Hardman! You came, you came! I dare not look at her yet. *Is she saved?*

Hard. Your daughter is innocent in thought as in deed — I speak in the name of the rights she has given me; you permitted me to ask for her hand; and here she has pledged it!

Sir Geof. O my child! my child! I never called you that name before. Did I? Hush! I know now that thou art my child; know it by my anguish; know it by my joy. Who could wring from me tears like these, but a child!

Easy. But how is it all, Mr. Hardman? you know everything! That fool Softhead, with his cock-and-bull story, frightened us out of our wits.

Soft. That's the thanks I get! How is it all, Mr. Hardman?

Sir Geof. Ugh, what so clear? He came here — he saved her! My child was grateful. Approach, Hardman, near, near. Forgive me, if your childhood was lonely, forgive me, if you seemed so unfriended. Your father made me promise that you should not know the temptations that he thought had corrupted himself, — should not know of my favours, to be galled by what he called my suspicions, — should not feel the yoke of dependence; — should believe that you forced

your own way through the world — till it was made. Now it is so. Ah, not in vain did I pardon him his wrongs against me; not in vain fulfil that sad promise which gave a smile to his lips in dying; not in vain have I bestowed benefits on you. You have saved — I know it — I feel it; saved from infamy — my child.

Lucy. Hush, sir, hush!

[*Throws herself into BARBARA'S arms.*

Hard. My father? Benefits? You smile, Mr. Easy. What means he? No man on this earth ever bestowed benefits on me!

Easy. Ha! ha! ha! Nay, excuse me; but when I think that that's said by a clever fellow like you — ha! ha! — the jest is too good; as if any one ever drove a coach through this world but what some other one built the carriage, or harnessed the horses! Why, who gave you the education that helped to make you what you are? Who slyly paid Tonson, the publisher, to bring out the work that first raised you into notice? Who sent you the broker with the tale of the South-Sea Scheme? From whose purse came the sum that bought your annuity? Whose land does the annuity burthen? Who told Fleece'em, theboroughmonger, to offer you a seat in Parliament? Who paid for the election that did not cost you a shilling? — who, but my suspicious, ill-tempered, good-hearted friend there? And you are the son of his foster-brother, the man who first wronged and betrayed him!

Soft. And this is the gentleman who knows everybody and everything? Did not even know his own father! La! why he's been quite a take-in! Ha! ha!

Easy. Ha! ha! ha!

Hard. And all the while I thought I was standing apart from others, — needing none; served by none; mastering men; moulding them, — the men whom my father had wronged went before me with noiseless beneficence, and opened my path through the mountain I fancied this right hand had hewn!

Sir Geof. Tut! I did but level the ground; till you were strong eno' to rise of yourself; I did not give you the post that you named with so manly a pride; I did not raise you to the councils of your country as the "Equal of All!"

Soft. No! for that you'll thank Fred. He bribed the Prime Minister with his favourite Murillo. He said you wanted the post to win the lady you loved. *Dimidium mei*, — I think you might have told him what lady it was.

Hard. So! Wilmot! — I needed but this!

Easy. Pooh, Mr. Softhead! Sir Geoffrey would never consent to a lord. Quite right. Practical, steady fellow is Mr. Hardman; and as to his father, a disreputable connection — quite right not to know him! All you want, Geoffrey, is to secure Lucy's happiness.

Sir Geof. All! That, now, is his charge.

Hard. I accept it. But first I secure yours, O my benefactor! This house, in which you feared to meet infamy, is the home of sorrow and virtue; the home of a woman unsullied, but slandered, — of her who, loving you still, followed your footsteps; watched you night and day from yon windows; sent you those flowers, the tokens of innocence and youth; in romance, it is true — the romance only known to a woman — the romance only known to the pure! Lord Wilmot is guiltless! He led your child to the arms of a mother!

Sir Geof. Silence him! — silence him! — 'tis a snare! I retract! He shall not have this girl! *Her* house? Do I breathe the same air as the woman so loved and so faithless?

Lucy. Pity, for my mother! — No, no! justice for her! Pity for yourself and for me!

Sir Geof. Come away, or you shall not be my child, I'll disown you. That man speaks —

Enter WILMOT, DUKE, and LORD LOFTUS.

Hard. I speak, and I prove — [*To the DUKE*] — The Memoirs — [*Glancing over them.*] Here is the very letter that the menial informed you your wife sent to Lord Henry. Read it; and judge if such scorn would not goad such a man to revenge. What revenge could he wield? Why, a boast!

Sir Geof. [reading]. The date of the very day that he boasted. Ha! brave words! proud heart! I suspect! — I suspect!

Hard. Lord Henry's confession! It was writ on his deathbed.

Lord Lof. 'Tis his hand. I attest it.

Duke. I, too, John, Duke of Middlesex.

Sir Geof. [who has been reading the confession]. Heaven forgive me! Can *she*? The flowers; the figures; the — How blind I've been! Where is she? where is she? You said she was here! [LADY THORNSIDE appears at the door.] Ellinor! Ellinor! to my arms — to my heart — O my wife! Pardon! Pardon!

Lady Thorn. Nay, all was forgiven when I once more embrac'd our child.

Hard. [to LOFTUS and DUKE]. My Lords, destroy this Requisition! When you signed it, you doubtless believed that the Prince you would serve was of the Church of your Protestant fathers? You are safe evermore; for your honour is freed. The Prince has retired to Rome, and abjured your faith. I will convince you of this later.

[DUKE and SOFTHEAD continue to shun each other with mutual apprehension.

Easy [to WILMOT]. Glad to find you are not so bad as you seemed, my Lord; and now that Lucy is engaged to Mr. Hardman —

Wil. Engaged already! [Aside. So! he asked me here to insult me with his triumph!] Well!

Hard. Lucy, your parents are united — my promise fulfilled; permit me — [Takes her hand.] Sir Geoffrey, the son of him who so wronged you, and whose wrongs you pardoned, now reminds you, that

he is entrusted with the charge to ensure the happiness of your child! Behold the man of her choice, and take from his presence your own cure of distrust. With his faults on the surface and with no fault that is worse than that of concealing his virtues; — Here she loves and is loved! And thus I discharge the trust, and ensure the happiness! [Placing her hand in WILMOT's.

Sir Geof. How?

Lady Thorn. It is true — do you not read in her blush the secret of her heart?

Wil. How can I accept at the price of —

Hard. Hush! For the third time to-day, you have but one option. You cannot affect to be generous to me at the cost of a heart all your own. Take your right. Come, my Lord, lest I tell all the world how you bribed the Prime Minister.

Soft. [who has taken EASY aside]. But, indeed, Mr. Easy, I reform; I repent. Mr. Hardman will have a bride in the country — let me have a bride in the city. After all, I was not such a very bad monster.

Easy. Pooh! Won't hear of it! Want to marry only just to mimic my Lord.

Bar. Dear Lord Wilmot; do say a good word for us.

Easy. No, sir; no! Your head's been turned by a lord.

Wil. Not the first man whose head has been turned by a lord, with the help of the Duke of Burgundy — eh, Mr. Easy? I'll just appeal to Sir Geoffrey.

Easy. No — no — hold your tongue, my Lord.

Wil. And you insisted upon giving your daughter to Mr. Softhead; forced her upon him.

Easy. I — never! — When?

Wil. Last night, when you were chaired member for the City of London. I'll just explain the case to Sir Geoffrey —

Easy. Confound it — hold — hold! — You like this young reprobate, Barbara?

Bar. Dear papa, his health is so delicate! I should like to take care of him.

Easy. There, go, and take care of each other. Ha! ha! I suppose it is all for the best.

[DUKE takes forth, and puts on, his spectacles; examines SOFTHEAD curiously — is convinced that he is human, approaches, and offers his hand, which SOFTHEAD, emboldened by BARBARA, though not without misgivings, accepts.

A great deal of dry stuff, called philosophy, is written about life. But the grand thing is to take it coolly, and have a good-humoured indulgence —

Wil. For the force of example, Mr. Easy!

Soft. Ha! ha! ha!

Wil. For the follies of fashion, and the crimes of monsters like myself, and that terrible Softhead!

Sir Geof. Ha! ha!

Hard. You see, my dear Wilmot, many sides to a character!

Wil. Plague on it, yes! But get at them all, and we're not so bad as we seem —

Soft. No, Fred, not quite so bad!

Wil. Taking us as we stand — ALTOGETHER!

“DAVID FALLEN IS DEAD!”

OR,

A KEY TO THE PLAY.

(AN AFTER-SCENE, BY WAY OF AN EPILOGUE.)

(Intended to have been spoken by the Original Amateur Performers.)

S C E N E.

WILMOT's Apartment. — WILMOT, SIR GEOFFREY, SOFTHEAD,
EASY, and HARDMAN, seated at a Table. Wine, Fruits, &c.

Wil. Pass the wine — what's the news?

Easy. Funds have risen to-day.

Sir Geof. I suspect it will rain.

Easy. Well, I've got in my hay.

Hard. DAVID FALLEN IS DEAD!

Omnès. DAVID FALLEN!

Wil. Poor fellow!

Sir Geof. I should like to have seen him!

Soft. I saw him! So yellow!

Hard. Your annuity killed him!

Wil. How — how? to the point.

Hard. By the shock on his nerves — at the sight
of a joint. A very great genius —

Easy. I own — now he's dead,
That a writer more charming —

Wil. Was never worse fed!

Hard. His country was grateful —

Soft. [surprised]. He looked very shabby!

Hard. His bones —

Soft. You might count them! —

Hard. Repose in the Abbey!

Soft. [after a stare of astonishment]. So THAT is the
way that a country is grateful!

Ere his nerves grew so weak, — if she'd sent him a
plateful.

Easy [hastily producing a long paper]. My TAXES!
Your notions are perfectly hateful!

[*Pause. — Evident feeling that there's no getting over.*
M.R. EASY's paper.]

Wil. Pope's epigram stung him

Hard. Yes, Pope has a sting.

Wil. But who writes the epitaph?

Hard. Pope: a sweet thing!

Wil. 'Gad, if I were an author, I'd rather, instead,
Have the epitaph living — the epigram dead.

If Pope had but just reconsidered that matter,
Poor David —

Soft. Had gone to the Abbey much fatter!

Easy. He was rather a scamp!

Wil. Put yourself in his place.

Easy [*horror-struck*]. Heaven forbid!

Hard. Let us deem him the Last of a Race!

Sir Geof. But the race that succeeds may have
little more pelf.

Hard. Ay; and trials as sharp. I'm an author myself.
But the remedy? Wherefore should authors not
build —

Easy. An alms-house?

Hard. No, merchant, their own noble guild!
Some fortress for youth in the battle for fame;
Some shelter that Age is not humbled to claim;
Some roof from the storm for the Pilgrim of Know-
ledge; —

Wil. Not unlike what our ancestors meant by — a
College;
Where teacher and student alike the subscriber,
Untaxing the Patron, —

Easy. The State —

Hard. Or the briber, —

Wil. The son of proud Learning shall knock at
the door

And cry *This** is rich, and not whine *That*** is poor.

Hard. Oh right! For these men govern earth from
their graves —

Shall the dead be as kings, and the living as slaves!

Easy. It is all their own fault — they so slave one
another;

* The head.

** The pocket.

Not a son of proud Learning but knocks — down his brother!

Wil. Yes! other vocations, from Thames to the Border,

Have some *esprit de corps*, and some pride in their order;

Lawyers, soldiers, and doctors, if quarrels do pass,
Still soften their spite from respect to their class;
Why should authors be spitting and scratching like tabbies,

To leave but dry bones —

Soft. For those grateful cold Abbeys!

Hard. Worst side of their character!

Wil. True to the letter.

Are their sides, then, so fat, we can't hit on a better?

Hard. Why — the sticks in the fable! — our Guild be the tether.

Wil. Ay: the thorns are rubbed off when the sticks cling together.

Soft. [musingly]. I could *be* — yes — I could be a Pilgrim of Knowledge,

If you'd change Deadman's Lane to a snug little College.

Sir Geof. Ugh! stuff! — it takes money a College to found.

Easy. I will head the subscription myself — with a pound.

Hard. Quite enough from a friend: for we authors should feel

We must put our own shoulders like men to the wheel.
Be thrifty when thriving — take heed of the morrow, —

Easy. And not get in debt —

Sir Geof. Where the deuce could they borrow?

Hard. Let us think of a scheme.

Easy. He is always so knowing.

Wil. A scheme! I have got one; the wheel's set
a-going!

A play from one author.

Hard. With authors for actors. —

Wil. And some benefit nights, —

Both. For the world's benefactors.

Sir Geof. Who'll give you the play? it will not be
worth giving,

Authors now are so bad; always are while they're
living!

Easy. Ah! if David Fallen, great genius, were
here —

Omnès. Great genius!

Hard. A man whom all time shall revere!

Soft. [impatiently]. But he's dead.

Omnès [lugubriously]. He is dead!

Easy. The true Classical School, sir!

Ah! could he come back!

Wil. He'll not be such a fool, sir.

[*Taking HARDMAN aside, whispers.*

We know of an author.

Hard. [doubtfully]. Ye—s—s, David was brighter.

Omnès. But he's dead.

Hard. This might do — as a live sort of writer.

Easy. Alive! that looks bad.

Soft. Must we take a live man?

Wil. To oblige us he'll be, sir, — as dead as he can!

Soft. Alive; and *will* write, sir?

Hard. With pleasure, sir.

Soft. PLEASE!

Hard. With less than your wit, he has more than your leisure.

Coquets with the Muse —

Sir Geof. Lucky dog to afford her!

Wil. Can we get his good side?

Hard. Yes, he's proud of his order.

Wil. Then he'll do!

Sir Geof. As for wit — he has books on his shelves.

Hard. Now the actors?

Wil. By Jove, we will act it ourselves.

[*Omnès, at first surprised into enthusiasm, succeeded by great consternation.*

Sir Geof. Ugh, not I!

Soft. Lord ha' mercy!

Easy. A plain, sober, steady —

Wil. I'll appeal to Sir Geoffrey. There's one caught already!

This suspicious old knight; to his blind side, direct us.

Hard. Your part is to act —

Wil. True; and his to suspect us.

I rely upon you.

Hard. [looking at his watch]. Me! I have not a minute!

Wil. If the Play has a plot, he is sure to be in it.
Come Softhead!

Soft. I won't. I'll go home to my mother.

Wil. Pooh! monsters like us always help one another.

Sir Geof. I suspect you will act.

Soft. Well, I've this consolation —
Still to imitate one —

Hard. Who defies imitation.

Wil. Let the public but favour the plan we have
hit on,

And we'll chair through all London, — our Family
Briton.

Sir Geof. What? — what? Look at Easy! He's
drunk, or I dream —

Easy [*rising*]. The toast of the evening — SUCCESS
TO THE SCHEME!

THE END.

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